OFFICIAL Wii LAUNCH NEWS!

Wii PREVIEWS: MADDEN NFL '07 >> MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE >> MONKEY BALL

NINTENDO POWER

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NOV. 2006, VOLUME 209
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DRAGON QUEST HEROES
ROCKET SLIME
EVERYONE
E
Cartoon Violence
Comic Mischief
Use of Tobacco
ESRB CONTENT RATING
www.esrb.org

NINTENDO POWER

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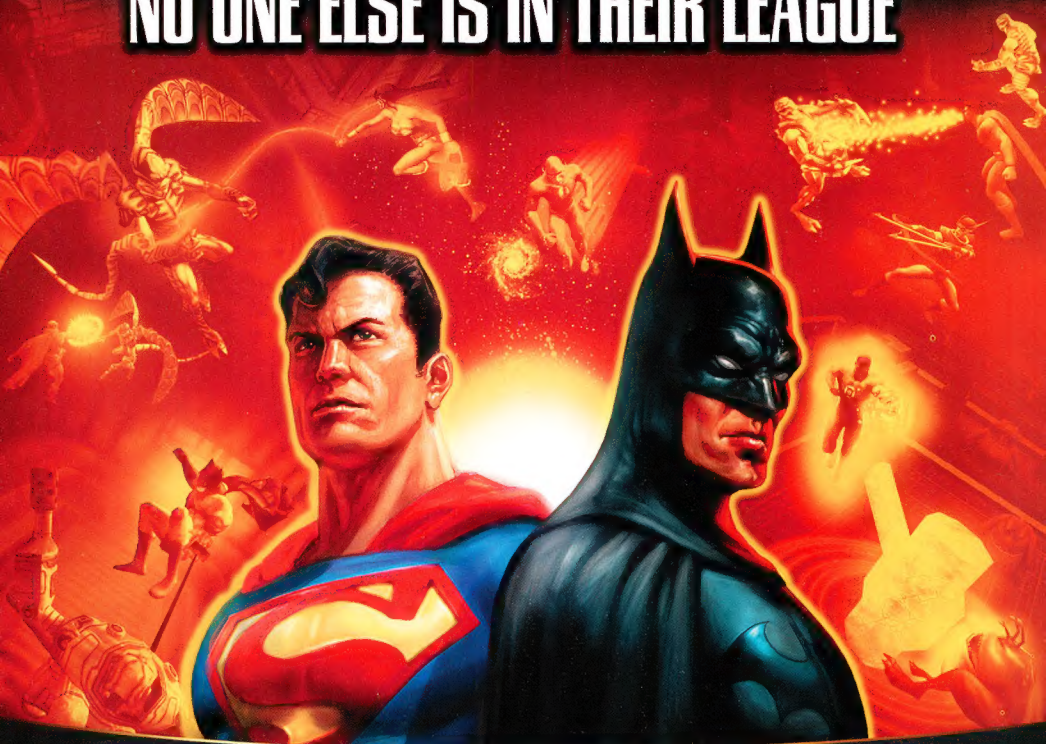
NO ONE ELSE IS IN THEIR LEAGUE



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NINTENDO POWER

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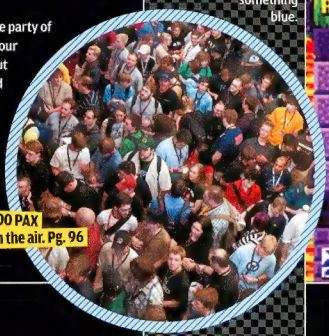
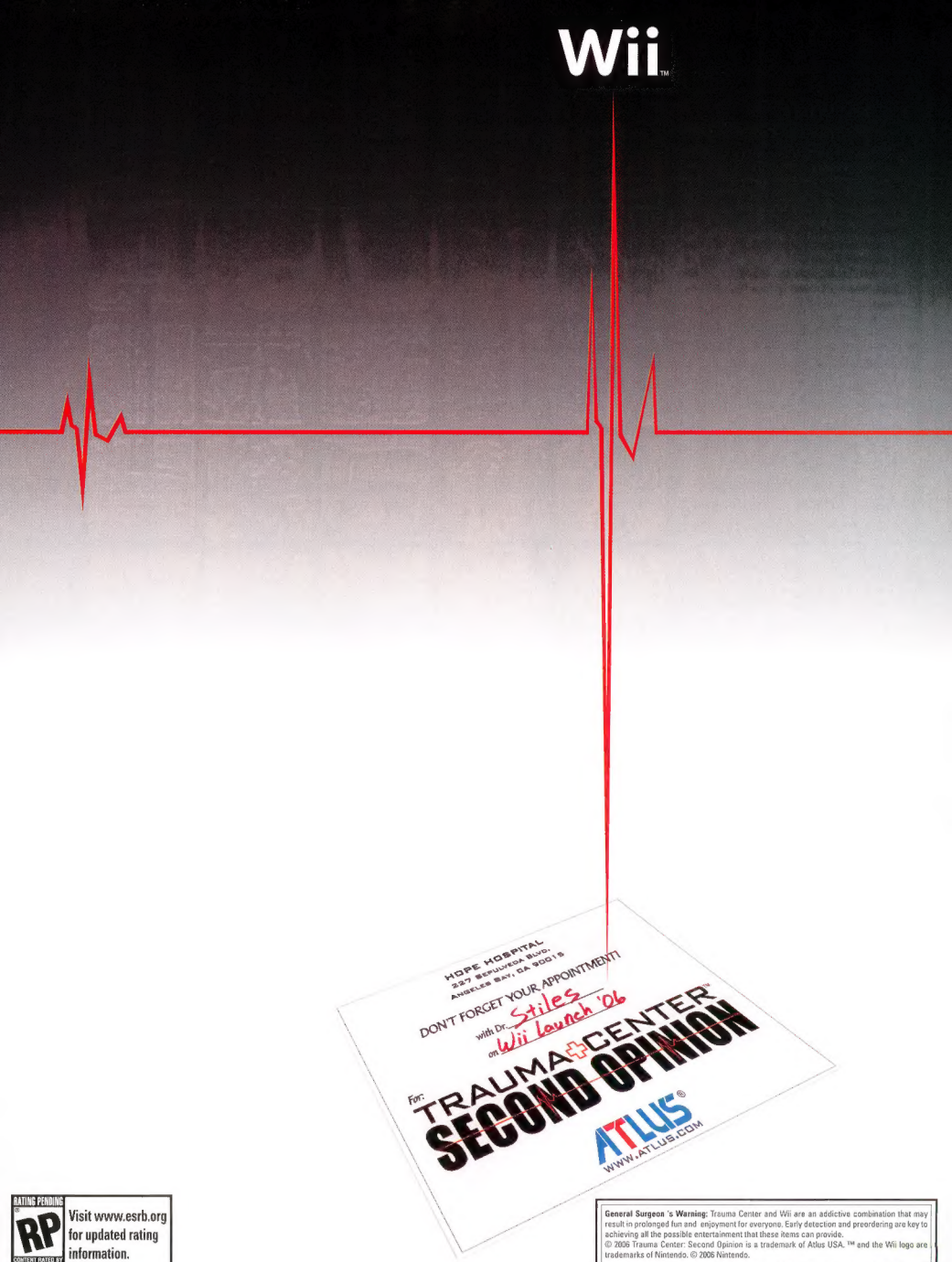


The sweet odor from 20,000 PAX attendees still lingers in the air. Pg. 96

Wii™



RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

General Surgeon 's Warning: Trauma Center and Wii are an addictive combination that may result in prolonged fun and enjoyment for everyone. Early detection and preordering are key to achieving all the possible entertainment that these items can provide.

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* Tentative Title

HEY LADIES... DID YOU KNOW I'M NINTENDO WI-FI COMPATIBLE!

Lonely Prof. ISO DSP for aid/fun times...

Me: Rough around the edges, lab coat, bald spot, glasses, Doctorate of Space. Luxury top-screen apt.

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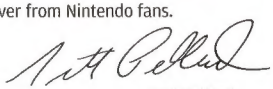
Pulse

LOOK WHO'S TALKING

The Pokémon franchise has given us deep RPGs, pinball tables, race courses, and puzzle games. But until Pokémon Mystery Dungeon came along, players never actually got to play as a Pokémon. The amazingly deep dungeon explorer combines strategy with real-time combat elements, endless exploration possibilities, and at its heart, a surprisingly engaging tale. Best of all, you can talk to other Pokémon and discover that they're much more than just collectible fighting pets. Whether you're a longtime Pokémon player or new to the franchise, our Poké expert, Chris Shepperd, will answer all your questions in this month's cover feature.

But as big as Pokémon is, this month's gaming news is dominated by Wii launch details, and NP's got the scoop. All the essential info you'll need to begin planning your holiday Wii-sh list begins on page 16. Not to be outdone, DS news this month includes announcements for a new Star Wars title and a game based on Adult Swim's Fullmetal Alchemist. We've also got plenty of Wii stories, including hands-on previews of the three Ms—Madden, Marvel, and Monkey Ball! In case your gaming plate is full already, our two strategy features will help you mix just the right enemy-beating Magnus in Baten Kaitos Origins and conquer the skies in multiplayer Star Fox Command dogfights. Finally, don't miss this month's packed Community section. We interview Fusion Tour headline band Hawthorne Heights, report on the fun and mayhem of this year's PAX convention, and bring you the wildest photos ever from Nintendo fans.



Scott Pelland
Managing Editor

LETTERS

WELL, DUH!

I'm writing to comment on your fantastic Inside Zelda articles each month. I have to admit I didn't read them at first, but I pulled out all 15 issues containing the Inside Zelda articles and started to read them just recently to pass the time until Twilight Princess's launch. While I was reading them, I realized the guys making this game are geniuses! How could we ask for a more brilliant cast of game creators to produce the most anticipated game of the year?

Greg L.
via the Internet

We agree. When you look at the talents of the people working on Twilight Princess, it's easy to understand the anticipation behind the game. Glad you liked the series!

MOBLINS IN OCARINA

You said in Volume 208 that Moblins appeared in all Zelda titles except Majora's Mask, yet I don't remember them in Ocarina of Time. Could you please let me know when and where they appeared in that game?

Peter
via the Internet

The Moblins in Ocarina of Time looked significantly different than the ones in other Zelda games—they were more akin to bulldogs than to boars. You'll encounter Moblins outside the Forest Temple—the first dungeon you'll explore after Link becomes an adult.

SNACKTACULAR

Is being a writer for NP all muffins and cupcakes or are there other aspects to it? And if you finish the magazine before the deadline, what do you do?

Kevin
via the Internet

Finish before the deadline—that's rich! Whew, you should be the one writing this column, with comedy like that! Besides, it's not all muffins and cupcakes; we enjoy a good pie from time to time, as well.

NINTENDO CHEESE

This probably sounds like a ridiculous idea, but Nintendo should consider opening a store here in Wisconsin. Sure, you have one in New York, but that's a little far to drive from Wisconsin, not to mention all the crazy traffic. Here in Wisconsin we have nothing to do but fish and milk cows! Come on—you know you want to!

Triple R
via the Internet

How 'bout this? Nintendo'll open a store in Sheboygan the next time the Packers win the Super Bowl. Deal?

WE GOT THE BEAT

I heard that the game Ouendan was really good, but unfortunately it is currently a Japan-only game. Will this game be released in the US, and what will it be called in English if it does come here?

Saif F.
via the Internet

North America won't see the addictive rhythm game Ouendan in its original form. Instead, the game has been redesigned as Elite Beat Agents, and we'll have a lot more coverage of it in the coming months.

YAY FOR BOO!

I just had to point out how unfair it is that Boo has not had a starring role in a video game yet. I mean, come on. Yoshi has had several games, Princess Peach has her own game, and even Tingle from Zelda has a game. What about Boo?!? He has feelings, too! Please give him a chance to show the world what he is made of! He would also like more coverage in your magazine. Thank you for your understanding,

Boo's mom
via the Internet

You're not exactly an unbiased source, are you, MRS. BOO? Do you pack his lunch before he leaves for ghost school every day, too?

GOT LINK?

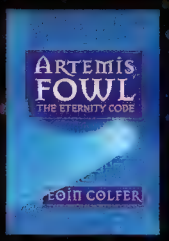
I plan to start collecting Zelda games. I have all the systems except for the SNES. Which games are the best?

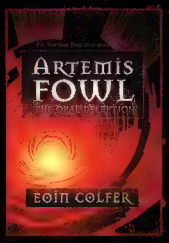
Calvin
via the Internet

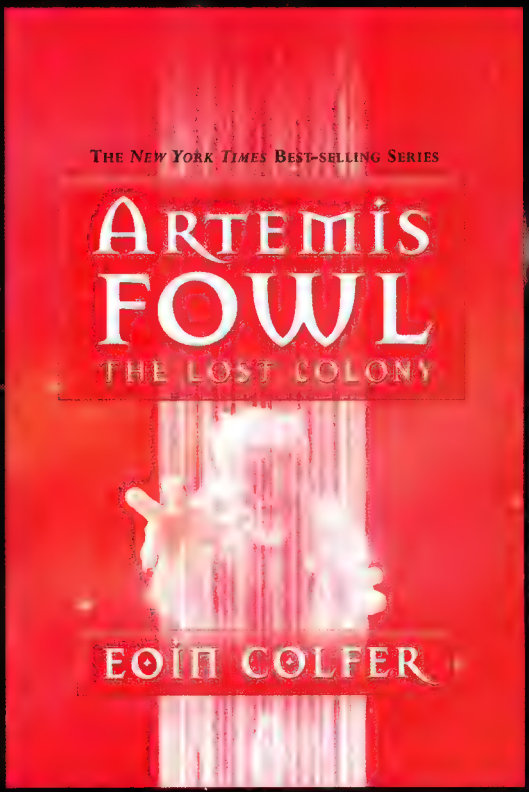
We hate to break it to you, but you better start searching for an SNES; A Link to the Past is widely considered one of the best games ever. Other top candidates include the NES original and Link's Awakening for Game Boy.

ARTEMIS FOWL
has met his match!

There's a **new** twelve-year-old genius
in town and she's **not** about to play nice.







The Latest Adventure
in the *New York Times*
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I've been a Nintendo fan since the NES days. I remember sitting with my brother and sister, playing games together, and our dad always seemed interested (he especially liked The Adventures of Lolo), so we would try and get him to play. But the thing is, my dad was in a car accident and lost his left arm before I was born, so as much as we wanted him to join in, he found trying to play with only one hand too frustrating. It struck me the other day while reading your article about the Wii (particularly Wii Sports), and seeing the way people were using the Wii controller, that my dad could actually play games with it! Ever since that day I have been more excited about the Wii, and hopefully I'll get to share my love of gaming with my dad! Thanks to Nintendo for bringing families together into the gaming future!

Derek J.
via the Internet

I'M BLUE

I hope you can help me with something that has been bothering me for the longest time. *Please* tell me the music composers for the original F-Zero on the SNES. I can't find their names anywhere on the Internet. The music was awesome, especially the song for the Big Blue course. Also, if the music has ever been released on CD, please tell me where I can find it. Thanks.

Bob the Walrus
via the Internet

The names of the composers are Naoto Ishida and Yumiko Kanki. The music was released on CD in Japan over 14 years ago by Tokuma Japan Communications. It's going to be a tough find nowadays, but it's out there—we promise.

THAT'S DISC-USTING

Recently my cat started upchucking a lot all over the place, and I feel that my GameCube is at risk. Do you have any suggestions of how to protect it while not doing anything to the cat?

Allie I.
via the Internet

We're at a loss for words. Maybe take your GCN to the vet and find a high shelf for your kitty. Wait—reverse that.

GOOD VIBRATIONS

Is there any place you can get a Rumble Pak for Metroid Prime Hunters without buying the game again?

Mariomanl
via the Internet

No worries; you can find Rumble Paks for sale directly from Nintendo at store.nintendo.com.

TICKLING THE IVORIES

I was just wondering, in games like Zelda or Metroid, what are the bosses doing before the hero reaches the boss's lair?

Holden P.
via the Internet

Fighting heroes isn't a full-time gig. They're usually moonlighting at their other jobs . . .

How come when Link finds Ganon at the top of his tower [in Ocarina of Time], he is playing the organ?

Shawn K.
via the Internet

. . . like playing the 7th-inning stretch at the Hyrule Octoroks baseball game.

PLEASE, NO EUROMARIO

Don't you guys think it would be cool if Nintendo made a Nintendo-themed amusement park? It would be so cool! It could have attractions like Mario Go-Karts or Metroid Prime Laser Tag! And of course a mess of rollercoasters.

Andy1123
via the Internet

We'll admit that we're a little leary of rollercoasters; they make us feel like Allie's upchucking cat.

I CAN'T HEAR YOU; I HAVE A BANANA IN MY EAR

In your review of Super Monkey Ball Adventure in Volume 208, you said that you had to "listen to the longwinded, unskippable babbling" of the monkeys. Actually, simply pressing the B Button skips any conversation and still allows you to accept the mission.

KB
via the Internet

Ugh. We went back and tried it again, and you're right. We swear we tried everything before lodging our complaint; the developers must have made a last-minute change after they supplied us with our review copy. However, that minor improvement likely wouldn't have changed our score.

CASUAL ATTIRE

Your article on Comic-Con International made me wonder—have you ever thought of having a Nintendo Power Halloween costume contest?

Pat A.
via the Internet

As a matter of fact, yes. Check out this month's Community to learn more of our Elite Beat Agents costume challenge.

FEEL THE BURN

When the Wii controller was first unveiled, I read that it would emit heat or cold. For example, when Link catches on fire it heats up, and when Link freezes it gets cold. What happened to this?

Mal18uller
via the Internet

We discovered that early versions of the controller also doubled as a breathing apparatus for deep-sea diving, and featured a jetpack for low-altitude aviation. Nintendo pulled these features before Sony could copy them, however. That's a joke! We kid the Kaz!

THAT'S A GREAT IDEA!

Why not make Pulse longer to fit more letters?

Nick321z
via the Internet

You know, just the other day we were talking about making Pulse longer, and . . .

PLEASE WRITE US:

pulse@nintendopower.com

Or via carrier pigeon at:

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Official Nintendo Seal

So if you let other people, piece by piece, make you into what they want, even if it's stupid, what happens to you?
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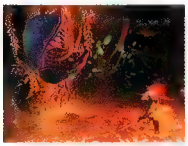
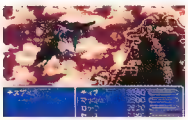
MOST WANTED

As voted on by the readers. Go to nintendo.com/mostwanted and let your voice be heard!



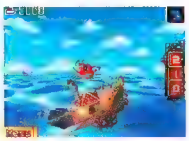
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

1. The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess
2. Super Paper Mario
3. LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy
4. Baten Kaitos Origins
5. Splinter Cell: Double Agent



GAME BOY ADVANCE

1. Final Fantasy VI
2. Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team
3. Final Fantasy V
4. Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis
5. Capcom Classics Mini Mix



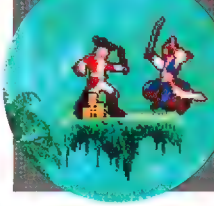
NINTENDO DS

1. The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
2. Final Fantasy III
3. Yoshi's Island 2
4. Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin
5. Contact

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

The power of talking cars continues to impress. Speaking of which, what happened to the main character in Knight Rider? He was awesome.

1. Cars
2. Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door
3. Naruto: Clash of Ninja
4. Super Smash Bros. Melee
5. Mario Kart: Double Dash
6. LEGO Star Wars
7. Super Mario Sunshine
8. Teen Titans
9. Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix
10. Need for Speed: Underground 2

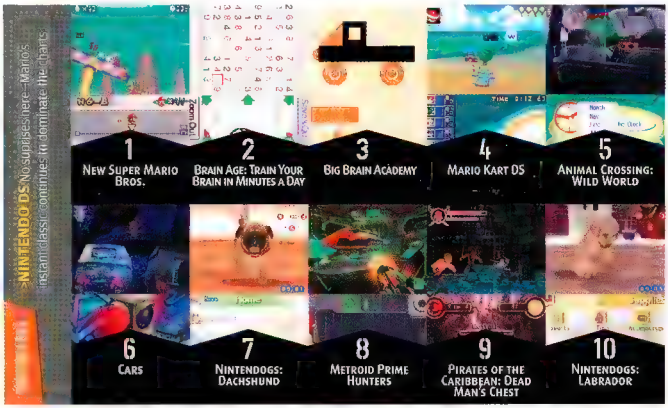


GAME BOY ADVANCE

Several of Nintendo's first-party games received a little bump this month after becoming Player's Choice titles.

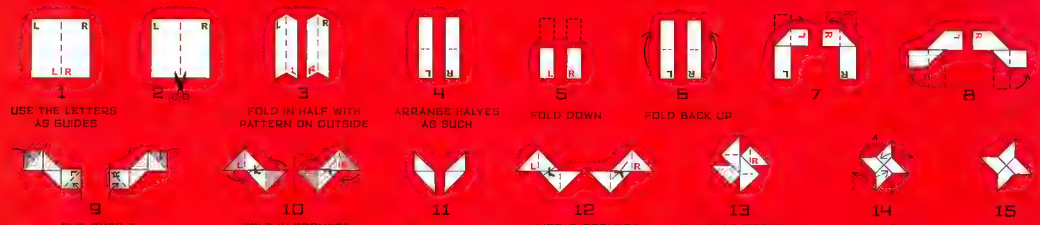
1. Cars
2. Super Mario Advance
3. Pokémon Emerald
4. Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest
5. Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3
6. Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga
7. Dogz
8. Super Mario Bros. 3: Super Mario Advance 4
9. Star Wars: Flight of the Falcon
10. Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories

Did everyone remember Talk Like a Pirate Day on September 19?


NINTENDO DS: No surprises here—Mario's instant classic continues to dominate the charts.
1 New Super Mario Bros.
2 Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day
3 Big Brain Academy
4 Mario Kart DS
5 Animal Crossing: Wild World
6 Cars
7 Nintendogs: Dachshund
8 Metroid Prime Hunters
9 Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest
10 Nintendogs: Labrador

Sales data courtesy of the NPDFunworld TRSTS Video Game Source.

THE SENSEI QUESTIONS YOUR ABILITY TO FOLLOW SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS.



RP
Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

REDSTEEL

Wii

UBISOFT

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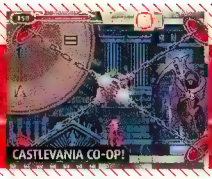
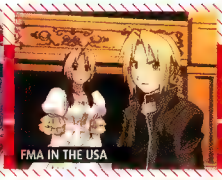




ALL SYSTEMS GO

Prepare for Launch

At long last, Nintendo pulls back the curtain on the Wii launch—date, price, pack-in title, and more revealed!

The Wii box! Cue angelic chimes.

After months of rumor, speculation, and message-board debate of apocalyptic proportions, Nintendo has finally announced official Wii launch details. The console will hit North American shelves on November 19 for an MSRP of $249.99. Each system will come with a wireless Wii remote and a nunchuk attachment, as well as a copy of Wii Sports, making it the first console to launch with a pack-in title since the Sega Saturn in 1995. Wii Sports is composed of five activities—tennis, baseball, golf, boxing, and bowling—designed to be simple and intuitive enough for everyone to enjoy, and to serve as a showpiece for the controller's unique functionality. Nintendo will also release The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Excite Truck on launch day (alongside a number of third-party titles), and expects approximately 30 games to be available by December 31. First-party titles will have an MSRP of $49.99, but other publishers are free to set their own prices (let's hope they follow the Big N's lead).

The other big news is that the system's interface—called the Wii Channel Menu—will offer a series of onscreen channels that enable a surprising variety of functions. The Disc Channel is where you'll go to play Wii titles or backwards-compatible GCN games. With the Mii Channel (pronounced Me), users can create playable caricatures of themselves to use in certain games (though it's not yet known *which* games). The Photo Channel provides a way to upload digital photos from an SD memory card and perform various editing functions or even add music and create a slide show. When connected to the Internet via broadband, you'll also be able to access the Forecast Channel, which provides local weather updates; the News Channel, which lets users access up-to-the-minute news from around the world; and the Internet Channel, which allows you to browse the world wide interwebs if you download the optional Opera browser. There's also a calendar-based Message Board that you can use to leave messages for family and friends, or send text and photos to e-mail accounts or cell phones. Finally, the Wii Shop Channel is where you'll download classic games from the NES, SNES, N64, Sega Genesis, and TurboGrafx-16 for the Virtual Console. Nintendo has yet to announce the Virtual Console's launch lineup and pricing details, but that information should be revealed in the coming weeks. Needless to say, we'll have much, much more on the Wii launch in next month's issue. For now, mark your calendars and start saving those pennies; it's going to be an exciting November. —Steve T.

LAUNCH DEBRIEFING

Wii

Price: $249.99

Date: Nov. 19, 2006

Launch Window Titles:

The Ant Bully
Avatar: The Last Airbender
Barnyard
Blazing Angels
Call of Duty 3
Cars
Chicken Little: Ace in Action
Dragon Ball Z Budokai Tenkaichi 2
Elebits
Excite Truck
Far Cry: Vengeance
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy
GT Pro Series
Happy Feet
Ice Age 2
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess
Madden NFL 07
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance
Metal Slug Anthology
Monster 4x4: World Circuit
Need for Speed Carbon
Open Season
Rampage
Rapala Tournament Fishing
Rayman Raving Rabbids
Red Steel
Spongebob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam
Trauma Center: Second Opinion
Wii Sports
World Series of Poker

INCOMING!

Wii Wars

Nintendo and developer Kuju unveil a suprising sequel to cult favorite Battalion Wars.

The original Battalion Wars for GCN was an interesting blend of action and real-time strategy. The sequel, announced recently at the Leipzig Games Convention, combines that same style of hybrid gameplay with the Wii controller to promising effect. The basic controls have you running around (or steering a vehicle) with the nunchuk's analog stick while aiming and moving the camera via the remote. But where the control scheme really shines is in moving your troops or ordering them to attack by simply pointing at a location or object on the battlefield and pressing A. It's immediately intuitive, and affects the overall feeling of the game enormously. This is one of those titles in which the benefits of the Wii controller are readily apparent.

On top of the new controls, Kuju promises a whole host of improvements over the previous game—smarter AI; larger, more destructible environments; the introduction of naval battles; and a variety of multiplayer modes via both split-screen and online play. The game also looks quite a bit better than its predecessor, especially in terms of lighting and special effects. No word yet on a release date, but this is definitely one to keep an eye on. —Steve T.

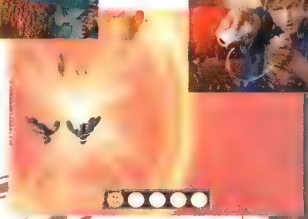
BEND IT LIKE BOWSER

It's Goal Time

Mario and friends hit the pitch on Wii with sequel Mario Strikers: Charged.

The other new Wii title revealed at the Leipzig Games Convention was Mario Strikers: Charged, the follow-up to last year's arcade-style soccer slam starring the multitalented denizens of the Mushroom Kingdom. The sequel retains the over-the-top approach of its predecessor, as well as a largely traditional control scheme—you'll move your players, pass the ball, and shoot in much the same way as in the GCN original. The motion-sensing functionality of the Wii remote does come into play while defending against Mega Shots, however. The new superpowered maneuvers fire multiple balls at the goal in rapid succession (and are performed by charging a meter, similar to the Super Strikes in the first game). Once the shot is successfully executed, the screen shifts to the goalie's point of view, and the defending player gets an opportunity to deflect each ball by moving the goalkeeper's hands with the Wii remote. While on defense, you can also shake the remote to perform a hard tackle. The other big change is that you can now select three sidekicks (the last game only let you choose one), and each has his or her own character-specific attributes. We'll have much more on Charged (ship date TBD) in the months to come. —Steve T.

Mega Shots can be worth up to five goals, so becoming proficient at first-person goalkeeping will be a big part of the game.



The Royal Wii

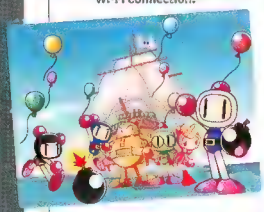
Ubisoft keeps 'em coming.

After announcing seven launch titles for Wii, Ubisoft has also revealed that a Prince of Persia game is in the works for Nintendo's upcoming console. Will it be a Wii-make or an all-new adventure? Ubi's not talking, but rest assured we'll stay on top of this one.

Atlus Drops the Bomb

Explosive franchise returns to DS.

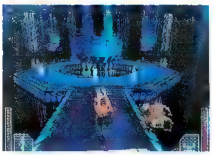
The busy bees at Atlus will bring Bomberman Land Touch! to the US this November. The DS title features an action-adventure Story mode, as well as classic multiplayer Battle modes via both single-card download play and Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.



Double Time

New publisher picks up DS side-scroller.

UK-based Lexicon Entertainment recently announced that it has acquired worldwide publishing rights for Chronos Twin. The game's unique premise has you playing as the hero in both the past and present, with each time period displayed simultaneously on a separate screen.



Rebel Rianna and droid Zeeo form a Lethal Alliance in an all-new chapter of the *Star Wars* saga.

The Wars Abroad

Ubisoft brings us a new *Star Wars* chapter—taking place between Episodes III and IV—exclusively for handhelds.

By the end of Star Wars: Episode III, the lines between the Rebel Alliance and the Empire—between good and evil—have been drawn. Sides have been taken. Lightsabers are at the ready. That's when the real fun begins, and when Ubisoft's *Star Wars*: Lethal Alliance for the DS is set. The third-person-perspective action title follows Twi'lek mercenary Rianna Saren and her security droid Zeec in a battle versus Kheev, a slave master of the Empire, and his Imperial forces.

Though Rianna is new to the *Star Wars* universe, many of the characters she encounters (Princess Leia, Kyle Katarn, Boba Fett, and Darth Vader) and locations she explores (Tatooine, Coruscant, Alderaan, and the Death Star) are not, giving the game a sense of the known and the unknown.

Rianna and Zeeo work together to pull off fighting combos that allow them to plow through their adversaries (thus the subtitle Lethal Alliance) and uncover a plot that could put an end to the rebellion before it even begins.

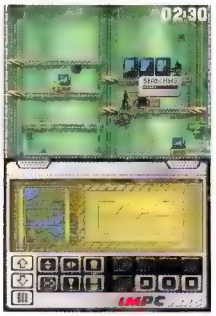
Teamwork also leads to the discovery of secret locations and hidden items. Between the 3-D-displayed baddie beatings and spaceship explorations are 2-D minigames that use touch-screen control to disconnect alarm systems and perform other delicate functions. Also in the offing are LAN battles for up to four players between droids of the same Z-0 makeup as Zeeo. The fighting will begin in December.
—George S.

We Love the '80s

The old-school lineup of Epyx games is about to experience a revival on the DS, thanks to the retro-gaming fans at System 3.

You may not remember Impossible Mission, but it was a big deal on the Commodore 64 in 1984. So big that it saw ports on the Apple II, Atari 7800, and other platforms of the day. In January, the story of Agent 4125 and his struggles against evil Elvin Atombender make its way to DS, with side-scrolling gameplay intact, and updated graphics. The game will challenge players to solve 36 puzzles in real time, six hours before Atombender plans to destroy the world.

Meanwhile publisher System 3 plans to continue its release of titles originally published by Epyx by giving us California Games (also on DS) in March. The sunny-weather collection (skating, surfing, and BMX Like racing, among other activities) will contain both Summer Games and Winter Games as unlockable extras. More Epyx titles may be on the way, and Wii versions (possibly for Virtual Console) are also in the works.
—George S.



Action above and weapon selection below: a deadly combination.

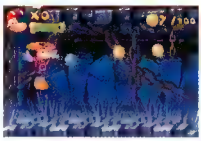
SILLY RABBIDS

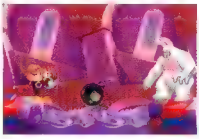
Bad Hare Day

Ubisoft's lagomorphic lunacy spreads to handhelds with DS and GBA versions of Rayman Raving Rabbids.

Having already shown what's in store for the Wii version of Rayman Raving Rabbids (check out our updated preview on page 31), Ubisoft has finally started to pull back the curtain on the DS and GBA iterations of the game. In contrast to the trial-based wackiness of their console counterpart, both handheld titles are traditional platformers. But each will offer a completely different take on Rayman's battle against his crazed rabbid oppressors. The GBA game has our limbless hero searching for magical costumes that grant him special powers, while in the DS game, he must enlist the help of four elemental Guardians, whom you can control with the stylus.

Unfortunately, only screens from the GBA title were available as we went to press. Look for DS screens in next month's issue. —Steve T.





As in the Wii game, the maniacal (and hysterical) rabbids come in all shapes and sizes.

The occasional Mode 7-style racing stage breaks up the side-scrolling action.

UNHOLY ALLIANCE

Slay Online

New details emerge on Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin's co-op play over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

Vampire hunters are already lining up for the November release of Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin on DS, and now new details on the game's Wi-Fi component have arisen to entice gamers even further. "There's going to be a shop mode where you can buy and sell collected items," explains Castlevania series producer Koji Igarashi, "and co-op play is going to be enabled for the game." In co-op mode—playable over Wi-Fi or local wireless—each player will control one of the game's heroes (the more-physical Jonathan or the magically inclined Charlotte) and work through a linear course consisting of chambers filled with enemies, including foes from previous Castlevania games. Although only one course is available at the game's outset, you'll unlock additional courses as you proceed through the game. Igarashi also dropped a tantalizing hint about the future of Castlevania: "Probably soon after this development, I'll try to brainstorm the sequel . . . We're probably going to continue on DS." —Andy M. & Chris H.

A THREE-HOUR TOUR

Get Lost, Again

Two more kids have been marooned on a deserted island, and it's once again up to you to make sure they survive in Konami's Lost in Blue 2.

Last year's survival adventure title Lost in Blue showed all kinds of promise; gamers' imaginations were roused with its intriguing locales, thought-provoking challenges, and innovative use of the DS.

Building on that foundation, Konami returns with Lost in Blue 2, where once again you must guide two young adults who have been washed up on an apparently deserted tropical island. This time, the two adventurers will face even bigger risks, such as natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes. The characters will have to cooperate using their individual talents. In addition to new story aspects, Konami promises new gameplay mechanics that take greater advantage of the DS's touch screen.

Look forward to more coverage of Lost in Blue 2 leading up to its release early next year. —Chris S.

Spore Dispersing?

Game's creator hints that upcoming PC title may head to consoles.

Sims mastermind Will Wright recently commented that he would like his latest project, Spore, to eventually launch across all platforms. Though publisher EA hasn't made any official announcements yet, DS and Wii versions would certainly make sense.

Virtual Tecmo

Publisher to jump on retro bandwagon.

As part of the company's recent financial report, Tecmo pledged to support the Wii's Virtual Console "aggressively." No further details were revealed, but we're keeping our fingers crossed for some old-school Hayabusa action.

LucasArts Gets Radical

Skywalker camp teams up with acclaimed developer.

LucasArts has announced that it will collaborate with Free Radical (makers of TimeSplitters and Second Sight) on a new game for next-generation consoles. Specifics remain shrouded in mystery.

NEWS FROM JAPAN!

Beasts and Beats

Square Enix prepares another Japan-conquering Quest for DS while the WarioWare team unleashes the next great GBA addiction.

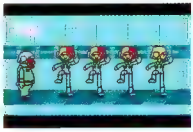
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker

A long-running spin-off of the Dragon Quest franchise, Dragon Quest Monsters lets players raise creatures from the beloved RPG universe and pit them against each other in turn-based battle. The newest installment, Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker for DS, is slated to hit Japanese retail shelves later this year. The game will support Wi-Fi play, and employs an impressive cel-shaded visual style similar to Dragon Quest VIII. Considering the unparalleled popularity of the DQ series in Japan and the continued sales dominance of the DS, this one seems destined to be a big hit. No word yet on a US release, however. —Steve T.

Rhythm Heaven

From the brilliant (and disturbed) minds behind WarioWare comes another unexpected gem chock-full of simple innovation and unhinged creativity. But whereas Wario's manic microgames put your reflexes and mental quickness to the test, the developer's latest creation instead challenges your rhythm with a collection of bizarre music-based trials. Each minigame is substantially longer than WarioWare's (a couple of minutes compared to three or four seconds), but they're no less varied or addictive. Rhythm Heaven is currently available only in Japan, and Nintendo has not announced any plans to bring it stateside. Hopefully that'll change; it would be a real shame if North American audiences didn't get a chance to experience this wonderfully imaginative title. —Steve T.

Test your rhythm by plucking whiskers from a mustachioed bulb of garlic. Yup, this is from the WarioWare team, alright.



WORKLESS WARRIOR

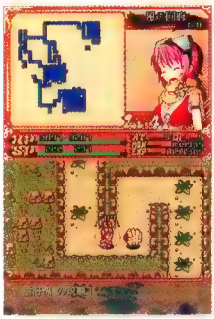
Ninja for Hire

Dungeon exploration and a wacky sense of humor sneak onto DS in Atlus's latest—Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja.

Come on. You can't just call a game Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja and get away with it, can you? Atlus can. As you can probably tell, Izuna doesn't take itself too seriously, and it's got plenty of action and adventure to go with its goofy sense of humor.

Developed by Success, the game is a dungeon-crawling action-RPG in the vein of Pokémon Mystery Dungeon, but set in feudal Japan and starring a female ninja named Izuna who has been laid off due to corporate restructuring. As Izuna and her fellow out-of-work ninjas search for new jobs, they end up angering the gods and getting the local villagers cursed; naturally, it's up to Izuna to fix the problem, which adds up to exploring randomly generated dungeons packed with items and enemies.

You'll be able to rescue Izuna from the unemployment line in early 2007. —Chris H.



What's an unemployed ninja to do? Explore complex, randomly generated dungeons and beat the heck out of enemies, that's what.

Full Disclosure

Destineer announces a North American release of Bandai's Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy for the DS.

Anime fans rejoice. Edward Elric and his crew, the subject of Adult Swim favorite *Fullmetal Alchemist*, are finding their way to the DS in side-scrolling action title Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy (note the "DS" initials of the subtitle). Story mode concerns Edward's quest to acquire the fabled Philosopher's Stone while fighting off the Homunculi hordes. To help complete his mission, he uses his power of alchemy to transform objects and repel attackers. Character mode, on the other hand, lets you assume the role of either Elric brother (Edward or Alphonse), Roy Mustang, Scar, Izumi, or Alex Louis Armstrong and unlock character-specific cinematics from the show with each victory. The game, due in early November, features vocal work from the stars of the television show, 10 touch-controlled minigames (Whack-a-Homunculus and Fullmetal vs. Flame, to name two) and unusual unlockables, such as sound libraries and talking-character alarm clocks. —George S.

The Elric brothers pulverize their adversaries by using both alchemy and good old-fashioned butt-kicking.

MAPS AND MAGIC

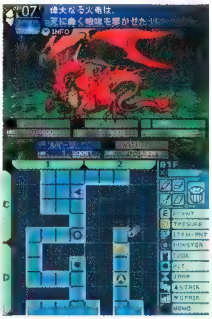
An Epic Unfolds

As you explore the world of Atlus's Etrian Odyssey for DS, you make your own map, complete with landmarks and treasure chests.

RPG exploration can be harrowing, not just because of the monsters that might pop up around any corner, but also because of the prospects of getting lost in a big, scary world. Etrian Odyssey formerly known as Yagdrasil Labyrinth solves that problem with a touch-screen mapping function that lets you reconstruct the 3-D world in 2-D as you go, marking places of interest with icons.

The game, due out early next year, is a turn-based battler in which you can acquire more than 20 skills for your party of five. Character classes include Landsknechts (masters of close combat) and Templars (holy knights with shields built to protect the entire party).

Kazuya Niinou (the creator of Trauma Center: Under the Knife) is overseeing the project, while legendary composer Yuzo Koshiro is contributing his musical skills. —George S.



Back-and-forth exploration is less tedious when you have a map.

DON'T-MISS CALENDAR

The dog days of summer are over and the fall flood of game releases is officially under way. This month is particularly rich with heady sims and fantastical RPGs.

10-3

Goaaaaal!!!!! Khaaaan!!!!!

October kicks off with EA Sports' **FIFA 07** (GCN, DS, GBA) and Bethesda's **Star Trek: Tactical Assault** (DS). Which begs the question, "Who would win in a fight: Zinedine Zidane or Capt. James T. Kirk?" Our money's on Shatner.

10-16

More puppy love.

If you're not one of the approximately 8 billion people who already own a version of Nintendogs, perhaps **Nintendogs: Dalmatian & Friends** will convince you to finally adopt one of the digital canines.

10-17

Something for everybody. And we mean everybody.

What do adorable pets, child detectives, and a tough-as-nails secret agent have in common? They'll be duking it out for your gaming dollars as **The Sims 2 Pets** (GCN, DS, GBA), **Touch Detective** (DS), and **Splinter Cell: Double Agent** (GCN) all hit on the same day. The Sims and Splinter Cell might be the bigger names, but don't overlook Atlus's sleuthing adventure, especially if you're in the market for something a bit out of the ordinary.

10-23

What's your sign?

Take a magical vacation with the latest role-playing epic for DS. **Magical Starsign** combines turn-based battles and brightly colored visuals with the tale of six young sorcerers on an intergalactic search for their teacher.

10-24

Join the union on GBA.

Atlus keeps the GBA fires burning with **Yggdra Union**, a strategy RPG from the makers of Riviera.

GAME WATCH FORECAST

The DS just keeps on rollin'—this month's additions to the handheld's upcoming line-up are led by some promising new entries from Ubisoft and Atlus. Next issue, we should finally have a forecast for a certain upcoming home console.

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●○
Backyard Baseball 2007	Atari	●●○
Backyard Basketball 2007	Atari	●○○
Backyard Football 2007	Atari	●○○
Baten Kaitos Origins	Nintendo	●●●
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●○
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	THQ	●●○
DK Bongo Blast	Nintendo	●●○
FIFA 07	EA	●●●
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●○
Foodfight!	Global Star	●●○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	Vivendi	●●●
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Nintendo	●●○
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	LucasArts	●●●
Mini-Golf Mayhem	Crave	●○○
Naruto: Clash of Ninja 2	Tomy/D3PA	●●○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nicktoons Unite: Battle for Volcano Island	THQ	●●○
One Piece: Pirates' Carnival	Namco Bandai	●●●
Open Season	Ubisoft	●●●
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●○
Super Paper Mario	Nintendo	●●○
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent	Ubisoft	●●○
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●○
World Championship Poker	Crave	●●○
Zatch Bell!: Mamodo Fury	Namco Bandai	●●○

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Arthur and the Invisibles	Atari	●●
ATV: Thunder Ridge Riders	Distination	●●○
Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●○
Backyard Basketball 2007	Atari	●●●
Barbie Diaries: High School Mystery	Activision	●●○
Battle B-Daman 2	Atlus	●●○
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	THQ	●●○
Camp Lazlo: Leaky Lake Games	Crave	●●
Capcom Classics Mini Mix	Capcom	●●●
Danny Phantom: Urban Jungle	THQ	●●
Disney Princess: Royal Adventure	Buena Vista	●●○
Dogz Fashion	Ubisoft	●●●
Dora's World Adventure	Global Star	●●○
Eragon	Vivendi	●●○
Family Feud	Global Star	●●○
FIFA 07	EA	●●●
Final Fantasy V Advance	Nintendo	●●○
Final Fantasy VI Advance	Nintendo	●●○
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●○
Foodfight!	Global Star	●●○
Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends	Crave	●●○
The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy	Midway	●●
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
Hardcore Pool	Telegames	●●
Harlem Globetrotters: World Tour	Destination	●●○
Hugo: Bukkazoom	Namco	●●
Jura & The Monophonic Menace	SouthPeak	●●○
Justice League Heroes: The Flash	Warner Bros.	●●
Koala Brothers: Outback Adventures	American Game Factory	●●○

Hit the Asphalt

Ubisoft's popular DS racer returns to the starting line.

Set for release in November, Asphalt: Urban GT 2 will offer a wide range of high-performance licensed cars and motorbikes, myriad customization options, and an appearance by the Pussycat Dolls. Wait, what?

Orbital Reentry

Makers of Racing Gears Advance join forces with new publisher.

Wondering what happened to Scurge: Hive and Juka & The Monophonic Menace? Both titles will finally ship by the end of the year thanks to a new business partnership between Orbital Media and SouthPeak Interactive. Now where's Pirate Battle?

Second 'Stray

Nanostray developer announces DS sequel.

Though no specifics were revealed, developer Shin'en recently announced that it's hard at work on a follow-up to 3-D space shooter Nanostray.

Announced / In Development / Ready for Release

Game Title — Publisher — ●●● — New games added to the list

The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	Vivendi	●●●
Legend of the River King Advance	Natsume	●●○
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	LucasArts	●●●
Little Einsteins	Buena Vista	●●○
The Little Mermaid: Magic in Two Kingdoms	Buena Vista	●●●
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●○○
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●○
Metal Slug	SNK	●●○
Monster Truck Mayhem	Distination	●●○
My Little Pony: Crystal Princess—The Runaway Rainbow	THQ	●○○
Naruto: Ninja Council 2	Tomy/D3PA	●●○
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nicktoons Unite: Battle for Volcano Island	THQ	●○○
Open Season	Ubisoft	●●●
Pirate Battle	Orbital	●●○
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team	Nintendo	●●●
The Proud Family	Disney	●●○
Santa Claus Saves the Earth	Telegames	●●○
The Santa Clause 3	Buena Vista	●○○
Scurge: Hive	SouthPeak	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●○
Sonic the Hedgehog Genesis	Sega	●●○
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	Activision	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●○
Strawberry Shortcake: Sweet Dreams	Majesco	●●●
The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	Buena Vista	●○○
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2	Atlus	●●○
Super Robot Monkey Team Hyperforce Go!	Disney	●○○
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2	Atlus	●●○
Superman Returns: The Videogame	EA	●●○
Teen Titans 2	Majesco	●●○
Tom and Jerry Tales	Eidos	●●○
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●○
Tonka on the Job	THQ	●○○
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●○
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	Atari	●●○
Ultimate Pocket Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Puzzle Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Table Games	Telegames	●●○
Unfabulous	THQ	●○○
Uno 52	Destination	●○○
Uno Freefall	Destination	●○○
VeggieTales: LarryBoy and the Bad Apple	Crave	●●○
Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex	Konami	●●○
W.I.T.C.H.	Buena Vista	●●○
World Poker Tour 2K6	2K Sports	●○○
World Reborn	Destination	●●○
X-Blades: Inline Skater	Crave	●●○
Xyanide	Playlogic	●○○
Yggdra Union	Atlus	●●○

NINTENDO DS

A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	●●
Arthur and the Invisibles	Atari	●●○
Asphalt: Urban GT 2	Ubisoft	●●○
Avatar: The Last Airbender	THQ	●●○
Bionicle Heroes	Eidos	●●○
Bomberman Land Touch!	Atlus	●●○
Bratz: Forever Diamonds	THQ	●●○
California Games	System 3	●●○
Cartoon Network Racing	American Game Factory	●○○
Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin	Konami	●●○
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	Nintendo	●●○
Chicken Little: Ace in Action	Buena Vista	●●○
Children of Mana	Nintendo	●●○
Chronos Twin	Lexicon	●●○
Clubhouse Games	Nintendo	●●●
Code Lyoko	American Game Factory	●○○
Contact	Atlus	●●●
Cooking Mama	Majesco	●●●
Crash Boom Bang!	Vivendi	●●●
Custom Robo Arena	Nintendo	●●○
Danny Phantom: Urban Jungle	THQ	●●○
Death, Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	Konami	●●○
DK: King of Swing DS*	Nintendo	●●○
DS Air*	Nintendo	●●○
Dynasty Warriors	Koei	●●○
Elite Beat Agents	Nintendo	●●○
Eragon	Vivendi	●●○
Etrian Odyssey	Atlus	●●○
Europa Universalis II	Pocket PC	●●○
FIFA 07	EA	●●●
Final Fantasy III	Square Enix	●●○
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	●●○
Flushed Away	D3PA	●●○
Fullmetal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy	Destineer	●●○
Garfield: A Tale of Two Kitties	American Game Factory	●●○
GoPets	Konami	●●○
Gunpey DS	Namco Bandai	●●○
Hannah Montana	Buena Vista	●●○
Happy Feet	Midway	●●○
Horsez	Ubisoft	●●○
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	Nintendo	●●○
Impossible Mission	System 3	●●○
Indiana Jones 2007*	LucasArts	●○○
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	Atlus	●●○
Justice League Heroes	Warner Bros.	●●○
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	Buena Vista	●●○
Kirby: Squeak Squad	Nintendo	●●○
Legend of the River King*	Natsume	●○○
The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning	Vivendi	●●●
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords*	Nintendo	●○○
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	Nintendo	●●○
LEGO *Star Wars* II: The Original Trilogy	LucasArts	●●●
The Little Mermaid: Ariel's Undersea Adventure	Buena Vista	●●○
Lost in Blue 2	Konami	●○○
Lunar Knights	Konami	●●○
Mage Knight: Destiny's Soldier	Namco Bandai	●●●
Magical Starsign	Nintendo	●●○
Mario Hoops 3-on-3	Nintendo	●●●
Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis	Nintendo	●●●
Marvel Trading Card Game	Konami	●●○
Mechassault: Phantom War	Majesco	●●●
Meet the Robinsons	Buena Vista	●○○
Meteos: Disney Edition	Buena Vista	●●○
Micro Machines v4	Codemasters	●●○
Monster Bomber	Majesco	●●○
Monster Rancher	Tecmo	●●○
Moonlight Fables*	Majesco	●○○
My Frogger Toy Trials	Konami	●●○
Nacho Libre	Majesco	●○○
Nanostray 2	TBD	●●
Need for Speed: Carbon	EA	●●○
Nicktoons Unite: Battle for Volcano Island	THQ	●●○
Nintendogs: Dalmatian	Nintendo	●●○
One Piece	Bandai	●●○
Open Season	Ubisoft	●●●
Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nuts	Activision	●●○
Panzer Tactics DS*	CDV Software	●●○
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All	Capcom	●●○
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team	Nintendo	●●●
Pokémon Ranger	Nintendo	●●○
Princess Natasha: Student, Secret Agent, Princess	Destination	●●○
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	Natsume	●●○
Quad Desert Fury 2	Majesco	●○○
Rayman Raving Rabbids	Ubisoft	●●○
Scooby-Doo!: Who's Watching Who?	THQ	●●○
Scurge: Hive	SouthPeak	●●○
The Sims 2 Pets	EA	●●○
SNK vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	SNK	●●○
Spectrobes	Buena Vista	●●○
Spider-Man: Battle for New York	Activision	●●○
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature from the Krusty Krab	THQ	●●○
Star Trek: Tactical Assault*	Bethesda	●○○
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	Ubisoft	●●○
Steel Horizon	Konami	●●○
Strawberry Shortcake: Strawberryland Games	American Game Factory	●●○
Superman Returns: The Videogame	EA	●●○
That's So Raven: Psychic on the Scene	Buena Vista	●●○
Tom and Jerry Tales	Eidos	●●○
Tomb Raider: Legend	Eidos	●●○
Tony Hawk's Downhill Jam	Activision	●●○
Top Gear: Downforce	Kemco	●●○
Totally Spies! 2: Undercover	Atari	●●○
Touch Detective	Atlus	●●○
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	●○○
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	●●○
Ultimate Pocket Games	Telegames	●●○
Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007	Konami	●●○
Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex	Konami	●●○
Xiaolin Showdown	Konami	●●○
Yoshi's Island 2	Nintendo	●●

* Tentative title

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SUPER SMASH BROS. Brawl

Wii SMASH FILES #04

KIRBY

FIRST GAME APPEARANCE:
Kirby's Dream Land - Game Boy (1992)

KNOWN FOR:
Voracious appetite, being a copycat, funny hats

BIOGRAPHY:
Pink, puffy Kirby may look harmless and cute, but no matter what he's up against, he always finds a way to turn adversity into an advantage—usually by inhaling foes with his "vaccuu-breath" and spitting them out as projectiles or ingesting them to learn their skills. Hailing from Dream Land on the planet PopStar, Kirby is a Warpstar Knight-in-training who has saved the realm on numerous occasions, often from the incompetence of King Dedede, but also from darker forces. One of Kirby's main assets is his ability to float in the air, which has proven quite advantageous in his Smash Bros. battles.

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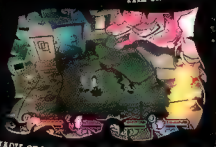

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(s06)

ESRB EVERYONE 10+ — Cartoon Violence, Crude Humor

PlayStation 2 · GAME BOY ADVANCE · Wii · NINTENDO GAMECUBE · CN CARTOON NETWORK interactive

The Wii games are coming! The Wii games are coming!

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Island Hopper

>YOSHI'S ISLAND 2

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: ARTOON • RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

Stylized, hand-drawn graphics and some of the most-expertly crafted platform levels ever conceived made Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island for the Super NES a milestone for action gamers in 1995. Sure, Baby Mario was annoying when he was bawling his head off, helplessly waiting for Yoshi to save him—but it was always satisfying to see him return to safety. The little tyke still cries while lost, floating in a bubble in the game's DS sequel, and it's still a good feeling to shut him up by saving him. Other nostalgic elements for old-school gamers are the dinosaur hero's ability to turn enemies into egg projectiles, a bad-guy-stunning ground-pound technique, and a second-effort jump that has him fighting for a little more air as he tries to clear a long gap. In the new adventure, a rotating cast of player-controlled Yoshis gain even more abilities with help from a growing group of toddlers in the lurch. When Baby Mario is in the saddle, the dinosaur is able to sprint, break blocks that contain coins, and throw eggs that ricochet off walls. With Baby Peach in tow, Yoshi uses the princesses's parasol to float. Baby DK gives Yoshi vine-climbing skills and the ability to dash through solid objects. Baby Wario has magnetic pull that helps the pair reach metal objects. Stork Stops in crucial places allow you to change the babies (no, not their diapers) and take advantage of the new kid's set of abilities.

The DS's two screens double the height of the playing field, giving you a view of enemies or targets well above or below the dinosaur, and adding depth to areas that require vertical movement. As you climb, Yoshi and pal transfer from the bottom screen to the top screen, then drop back again if the hero loses his footing. The playing field's vertical nature is especially tangible when Yoshi and Peach try to catch air currents and reach high ledges.

The story concerns the Yoshis' efforts to save Baby Luigi from Masikoopa Kamek. It takes place in five worlds, each with eight standard levels and additional bonus levels. Ten unlockable minigames give you more enemy-gobbling and long-jumping challenges that make for fun diversions after a long session of climbing and crying. —GEORGE S.

Practice baby juggling at Stork Stops.

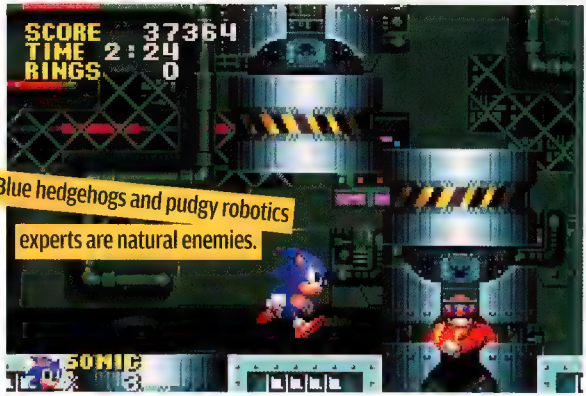
True Blue

> SONIC THE HEDGEHOG GENESIS

PLATFORM: GBA • PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM • RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

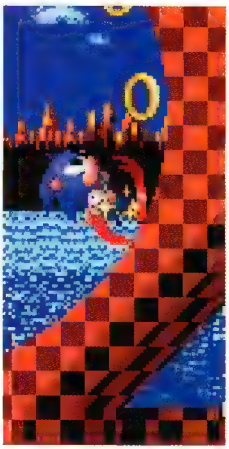
Everyone's favorite hedgehog turns 15 this year (boy, does that make me feel old), and to celebrate, Sega is preparing a special Game Boy Advance version of his first 16-bit blockbuster. Based on an early playtest, the game looks and feels almost identical to the original Sega Genesis classic. The top of the display has been chopped off a bit to accomodate the dimensions of the GBA screen (which is proportionally wider than a standard television), but otherwise it appears to be a faithful re-creation—with a couple of welcome additions. Alongside the original version of the game is an Anniversary Mode that enables Sonic to perform his signature Spin Dash—a maneuver that he didn't originally learn until Sonic the Hedgehog 2. Both iterations also allow you to save your progress rather than forcing you to play through the entire adventure in one sitting like in the old days.

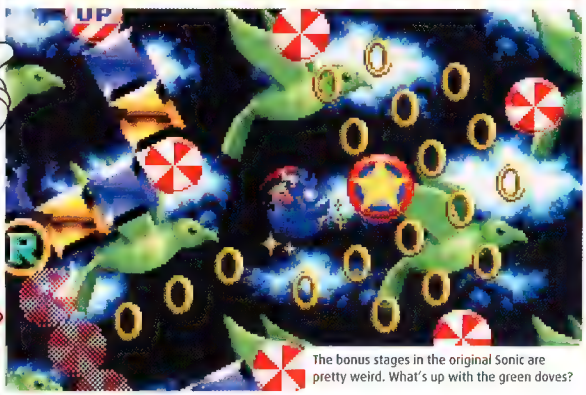
As for the game itself, Sonic's inaugural effort holds up remarkably well, and reminds us why the blue blur rose above the platformer pack back in 1991. It's not just about the hedgehog's legendary speed—the game boasts wonderfully varied level design, rich visuals, and some truly great tunes; Masato Nakamura's dynamic soundtrack still sounds fantastic to my symphonically spoiled ears. The GBA is home to quite a few oldies but goodies, and this is definitely one of the all-time best. —STEVE T.



Blue hedgehogs and pudgy robotics experts are natural enemies.

Sonic falls victim to the waterslide of doom.





The bonus stages in the original Sonic are pretty weird. What's up with the green doves?

Fully Charged

>ELEBITS

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: Konami • RELEASE: Fall 2006

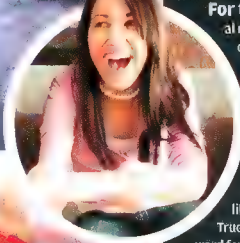
The last time we took a look at Konami's Elebits, it was shaping up to be a fun first-person scavenger hunt in which you could use the Wii controller to interact with just about everything in the environment as you searched high and low for energy-producing creatures called Elebits. That's all still true, but as development on the game progresses, we're learning that there's a lot more to Elebits than initially met the eye.

For starters, the developers at Konami have significantly fleshed out the way you proceed through the game, which is primarily set in and around the young hero's house. When you begin a level, no Elebits are providing power to the various fixtures in the room, but as you use your capture gun to snag the little critters, it will increase the wattage in the area, and as you reach specific benchmarks, dormant appliances will become usable. In the kitchen, for example, the lights, door, oven, microwave, refrigerator, dishwasher, and toaster all activate after you collect a set number of Elebits, and each one unlocks a new opportunity to interact with the game world—such as putting a turkey in the oven, popping popcorn in the microwave, or making ice cubes in the freezer. Manipulating the objects in such fashion inevitably reveals even more Elebits, which activate more contraptions, and the puzzlelike advancement continues. The game structure is somewhat reminiscent of sleeper hit Katamari Damacy.

To make the game even deeper, Elebits features an experience system that allows the capture gun to increase in strength. While many of the creatures—such as the blue, red, and flying orange Elebits—simply provide more electrical power upon their capture, special gold Elebits reward you with experience points that level up the gun and thereby let you lift bigger, heavier objects (and thus explore more of the environment). Adding to the complexity, the game utilizes a sound parameter that measures the amount of racket you make as you toss around furniture and appliances. Some Elebits are frightened by sound, so at times it's in your best interests to stay quiet; a few of the game's 15-plus stages even require you to keep the decibel level low.

Other levels are a bit more hazardous. Naughty black Elebits can attack the hero (yes, you do have a life meter), and in some missions your goal is to take out particularly aggressive boss Elebits. When you're tired of completing missions, however, you can kick back and enjoy a score-attack mode, or you can snag Elebits competitively with up to three friends; at press time, Konami representatives anticipated that the multiplayer mode would include the same stages as single-player mode. However you choose to play Elebits, it's certain to be an electrifying experience. —Chris H.

Chairs, tables, potted plants . . . you can toss around just about everything in Elebits.



Keep On Truckin'

>MONSTER 4x4: WORLD CIRCUIT

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Barcelona • RELEASE: Fall 2006

For those of us who aren't professional monster truck drivers, our childhood dream of getting behind the wheel of one of the beastly vehicles is getting closer to reality with Monster 4x4: World Circuit for Wii. While the destruction-heavy racing game is not entirely a new affair, the Wii version has been greatly enhanced, most notably in the game's control scheme. You'll hold the Wii controller like a steering wheel (similar to Excite Truck's configuration) and thrust it forward for a speed boost. To perform a stunt, you'll simply wave the controller around; different patterns translate to different tricks.

The game will not only control better than its predecessor; it will look better as well. Ubisoft promises that Monster 4x4 will run at a constant 60 frames per second on Wii (as opposed to 30 in the Xbox version). Monster 4x4 is only one of seven announced titles Ubisoft is preparing for the console's launch. We'll report further as more details come to light. —Andy M

Downhill, Both Ways

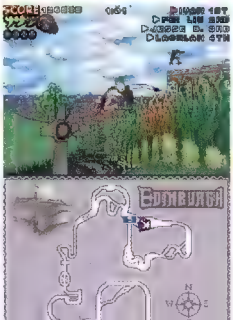
>TONY HAWK'S DOWNHILL JAM

PLATFORM: Wii, DS, GBA • PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Toys for Bob (Wii), Vicarious Visions (DS, GBA) • RELEASE: Fall 2006

The Hawk aims high this fall with Wii and handheld versions of Downhill Jam, the first full-on racer in Activision's Tony Hawk skateboarding series. The Wii game rolls through eight locations (among them an Edinburgh castle, the Hong Kong waterfront, and a Chicago shopping mall) and offers a branching world tour with 100 events that range from 30-second sprints to four-minute marathons, as well as slaloms and trick competitions. Pick-up-and-play control (for up to four players) comes from twists and turns of the Wii remote.

The DS title gives us even more types of events than American Sk8land did, plus four-player thrashing both in LAN play and over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. A chat option lets you record a 10-second taunt and send it to your opponents while you're grinding, power-sliding and grabbing big air. —George S

It's not the same old grind with Wii control.



Welcome to the Jungle

>FAR CRY: VENGEANCE

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL • RELEASE: FALL 2006

It's no secret that Ubisoft is a strong believer in Wii, and as further evidence of the publisher's unrivaled commitment to the console, its Montreal studio is readying a new installment of the award-winning Far Cry franchise. Vengeance is roughly based on Far Cry: Instincts Evolution for Xbox, but will offer a new storyline, additional maps and equipment, and, of course, Wii-specific controls. You'll use the nunchuk to move your character and the remote to aim your weapon as in other first-person shooters, but the game also utilizes the controller for a variety of fun-filled tropical activities—everything from driving the myriad vehicles you'll find on the island to taking down an unsuspecting enemy from behind with a machete. As with previous titles in the series, the developers promise strong stealth elements and interactive environments, plus a multiplayer Chaos mode (though it's not yet known whether it will be playable online). Vengeance is slated to hit during the Wii's launch window, so we'll keep a close eye on it in the coming months. —STEVE T.

Don't worry—the game is rarely this serene.

Far Cry's island paradise is home to some lovely scenery.

The Finer Elements

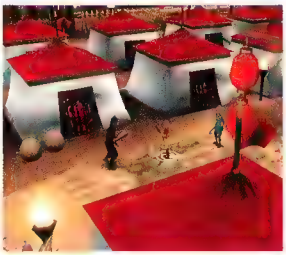
>AVATAR: THE LAST AIRBENDER

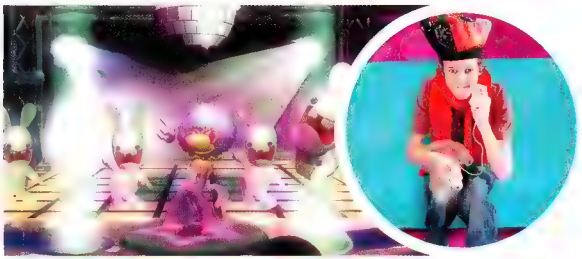
PLATFORM: Wii (ALSO ON GCN, DS & GBA)
PUBLISHER: THQ • DEVELOPER: STUDIO OZ
RELEASE: FALL 2006

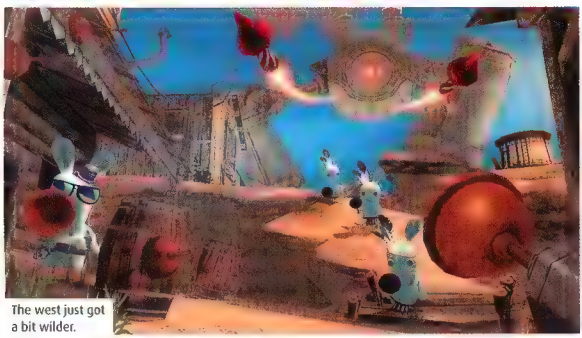
With its complex blend of magic, mythology, and martial arts, Nickelodeon's new anime series, *Avatar*, has begun to take America by storm. The story follows four characters, each of whom can harness the power of an element: fire, water, earth, and air—through an ability called bending. And soon, the four heroes will be bringing their adventures to the Wii.

We had a chance to go hands-on with the game recently, and we were pulled in by the stylish graphics and intuitive play mechanics. The game evokes memories of X-Men Legends for GCN—you control one party member at a time, but you can switch to another member at any time. Each character has a unique set of moves, which you perform by holding down a button then flicking either the remote or the nunchuk.

We'll have much more on Avatar as we get closer to the Wii launch. —CHRIS S.







Mad Genius

>RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS

PLATFORM: Wii (ALSO ON DS & GBA) • PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTPELLIER • RELEASE: FALL 2006

Ever since we got our hands on Rayman's upcoming adventure for our cover story a few months ago, it's been one of our most eagerly anticipated Wii titles. And after checking in on the game's progress recently, our enthusiasm is more fervent than ever. Michel Ancel and his team (previously responsible for such masterpieces as Rayman 2 and Beyond Good & Evil) continue to come up with all sorts of bizarre ideas for the Wii controller, and are now promising more than 70 different trials. Don't mistake this for a WarioWare-esque collection of minigames, though; while some of the trials are indeed short and sweet, others are much more involved. And everything is tied together with a hysterical story that pits the limbless protagonist against an army of maniacal rabbids (which are quite possibly the most inspired villains in video game history). The game also seems to have a welcome propensity for spoofing other popular franchises—scope out the rabbid doing his best Solid Snake impersonation. Red Steel may be getting all the hype, but Rayman is shaping up to be the true gem in Ubi's launch day lineup. —STEVE T.

The Cow Says . . .

Biology majors, take note: this is not how real bulls are built.

>BARNYARD

PLATFORM: Wii • PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Blue Tongue • RELEASE: Fall 2006

Time to dust off your overalls—Barnyard is moseyin' onto Wii this fall. The Wii version is mostly an enhancement of the entertaining GCN title released several months ago that featured bipedal, anatomically incorrect bulls. The big news about the Wii title is that its controls have been reworked to take advantage of the Wii controller. During story mode, the Wii remote manipulates the camera—you'll look wherever your hand points. You can also hold down a button and wave the remote to interact with items, such as breaking boxes or shaking jugs of tasty milk to turn them into cream.

Many of the minigames have also been revamped, and they all seem to take clever advantage of the new control methods. From fighting off potential cow-tippers to taunting unsuspecting mailmen, the minigames show many creative uses for the remote.

Early word is that you'll be able to lasso Barnyard at stores right around the launch of the Wii console. Yeehaw! —Chris S.

The Sims are goofy about their pets.

A Dog's Life

>THE SIMS 2 PETS

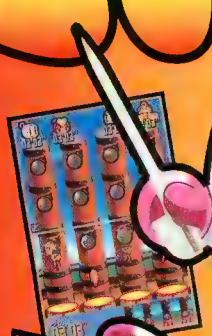
PLATFORM: GCN (also on DS & GBA)
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts • DEVELOPER: Maxis
RELEASE: Fall 2006

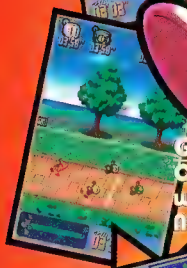
"If you think of Sims as little pet people, having your little pet people have pets is an adorable concept," says Rod Humble, executive producer of The Sims 2 Pets, in discussing the four-legged offshoot of the Sims franchise. "Seeing the interplay of these Sims, who've got their own minds, with pets, who also have their own minds, is magic to watch."

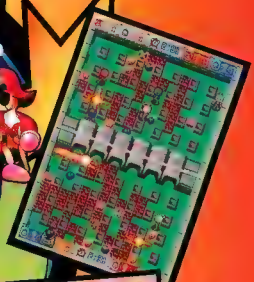
"It's a new level of depth," chimes in producer Ben Bell. "When you see how the Sims react to something different from other Sims, it makes them more believable." Adding to the believability is the Create-a-Pet feature, which lets you tailor your Sims' pets to look and act like your own dog or cat. And, says Bell, "The more you take care of your pets, the more they'll take care of you. You'll build a closer bond with them. You'll also unlock new interactions with them, new abilities, and new items." The items, available in the game's town-square shopping area, include treats, toys, clothing, and more pets. The town square is also a place for Sims to meet other Sims and have their pets interact with each other.

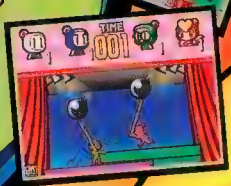
Humble and Bell see the game as a storytelling device, with pets adding texture to the tale. "You can make a crazy cat lady," says Bell, "then make the guy with sloppy, happy dogs, and introduce him to the cat lady, then see what happens." That, and many other stories, will unfold this fall. —George S.

BOO-YAH!









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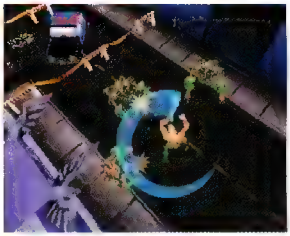
League Play

>JUSTICE LEAGUE HEROES

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: SENSORY SWEEP • RELEASE: OCTOBER 2006

Not to be outdone by Marvel's Ultimate Alliance, DC Comics's own supergroup is saving the planet's citizenry from evildoers this fall in Justice League Heroes. Over the course of the DS adventure you recruit good-guy tandems from a field of four, then go about the business of saving the world in eight superhero-sized levels. The baddy battling is displayed with an overhead view. Superman and Wonder Woman are able to fly, but Batman and the Flash are forced to pound perpetrators at street level. Special attacks include Wonder Woman's Tiara Throw, Superman's Heat Vision, the Flash's Punch Rush, and Batman's Batarang toss, which is touch-controlled. Six additional members of the Justice League—Aquaman, Zantanna, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, Hawkgirl, and Huntress—make punch-and-run cameos when the good guys are in a bind. Adding to the action are four unlockable touch-controlled minigames, among them a game in which Superman proves that he is more powerful than a locomotive. —GEORGE S.



>JUSTICE LEAGUE HEROES: THE FLASH

PLATFORM: GBA • PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD • RELEASE: OCTOBER 2006

While The Flash is sharing the spotlight with his Justice League compadres in their DS adventure, the fastest man alive is getting to shine all by himself in Justice League Heroes: The Flash for GBA. Taking a cue from side-scrolling beat-'em-up games of old, JLH: The Flash is a brawler with a superheroic twist: instead of just punching the bad guys in the face, he punches them in the face so fast he seems to violate the laws of time. The Flash can home in on enemies at lightning speed and knock them silly; he can encircle them with a whirlwind attack; and most importantly, he can use his "speed force," which effectively slows down time in the game world while The Flash moves at regular speed, allowing him to easily dodge projectiles and reach bosses' vulnerable spots. If you engage The Flash's speed powers at the split second his life is depleted, you can even literally outrun Death itself. And though The Flash is the game's star, he's not too proud to enlist the help of allies like Superman, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow, and Black Canary for devastating special attacks when things get tough. With 10 action-filled areas across five stages (along with plentiful extra features like a Boss Rush mode and a race against Superman), The Flash just might have what it takes to hang with the heavies of the superhero world. —CHRIS H.

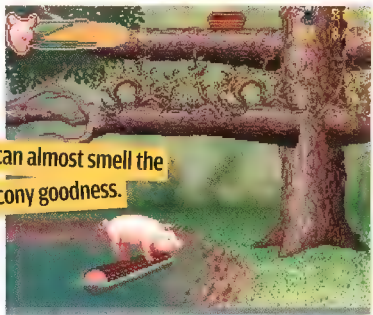
Good Charlotte

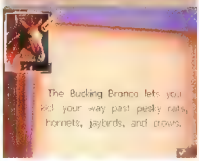
>CHARLOTTE'S WEB

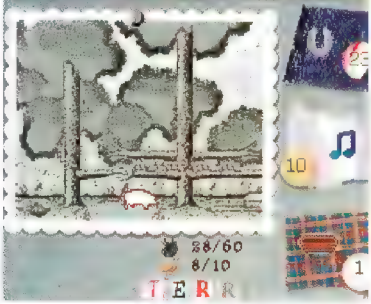
PLATFORM: DS (ALSO ON GBA) • PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: BACKBONE • RELEASE: DECEMBER 2006

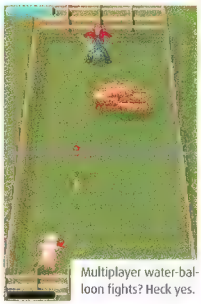
E. B. White's classic children's tale is headed not only to the big screen this holiday, but to small screens as well. The Sega-published DS title follows the visual style from the movie but in the form of a sidescrolling adventure starring Wilbur the pig. You'll control Wilbur through 16 platform-intensive levels, collecting items and power-ups as you go along. The quest also includes some interesting DS-centric activities. At the start of each level, for instance, you'll have to yell into the microphone to wake Wilbur up. Also, any time you encounter your best friend Fern, you can engage in a number of touch-screen activities (such as petting Wilbur or brushing his teeth) to replenish health.

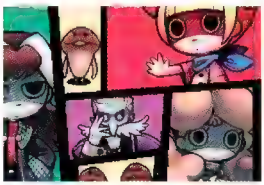
In addition to the main adventure, Charlotte's Web boasts 12 unlockable minigames. Most of the activities are controlled with the stylus, and some even include multiplayer modes. From what we've played, Charlotte's Web looks promising as both a minigame compilation and as a platformer. —ANDY M.








Multiplayer water-balloon fights? Heck yes.



Gothic Gumshoe

>TOUCH DETECTIVE

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: SUCCESS/BEEWORKS • RELEASE: OCTOBER 2006

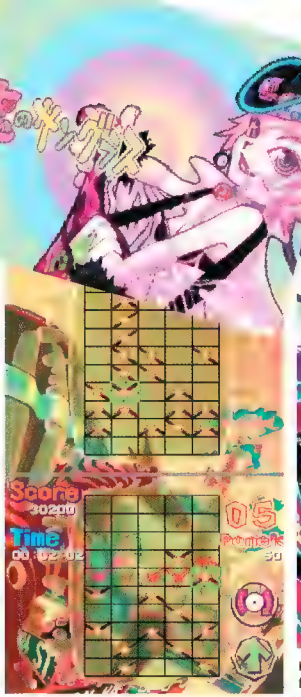
The publisher responsible for 2005's Trauma Center: Under the Knife brings us yet another touch-controlled oddity. In Touch Detective, you control Mackenzie, a young sleuth trying to keep her detective business afloat by solving cases with her friends. As Mackenzie, you must gather evidence by exploring every inch of the game's whacky locales with the stylus. Once the evidence and testimonies begin to pile up, you'll be tasked with putting the pieces together and following a rabbit trail of events to solve each case. The puzzle-solving action will be familiar to Phoenix Wright fans, though Touch Detective easily stands alone with its anime-influenced, Gothic-Lolita art style. In addition, the dialogue and characters (which include a robotic butler and a mushroom sidekick named Funghi) are downright hilarious. This one's both cute and creepy and may end up being the sleeper hit of 2006 for DS. —ANDY M.

Linear Thinking

>GUNPEY DS

PLATFORM: DS • PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: Q ENTERTAINMENT
RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2006

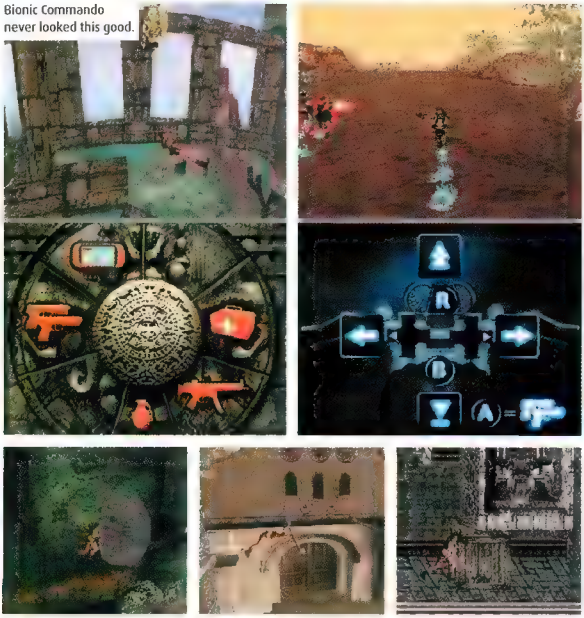
If you haven't already heard, Gunpey isn't some random word the game's developers pulled out of a hat. It's an homage to the game's designer, the late, great Gunpei Yokoi (the genius behind many of Nintendo's biggest hits, including the Game Boy hardware and the Metroid series), and from what we've played so far, Gunpey DS is living up to its pedigree. Like all addictive puzzle games, Gunpey DS has a simple premise: as panels containing diagonal lines scroll up the screen, it's your job to position them to create continuous playfield-spanning patterns and thus clear them away. The more panels you connect in a pattern, the higher the score, but also the greater the risk. Although Gunpey has been released on other systems in the past (it was available on Bandai's Japanese WonderSwan handheld), the DS version ups the ante with superresponsive touch-screen controls and enhanced visuals. The game packs in plenty of modes too, including a story mode, a stage-attack mode where you attempt to clear away a set number of panels, and a dual-screen mode where you have to juggle between action on two screens at once. —CHRIS H.



It ain't a proper puzzle game without cowgirls and space penguins.

Like in Meteos, each stage in Gunpey features a unique presentation.

Bionic Commando never looked this good.



Tales from the Crypt

>TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

PLATFORM: DS, GBA (ALSO ON GCN) • PUBLISHER: EIDOS
DEVELOPER: HUMANSOFT • RELEASE: FALL 2006

A few months ago, we had a very early look at Lara Croft's latest adventures on the DS and GBA, and to be honest the handheld versions of Lara's latest were pretty rough around the edges. We're happy to report that the team behind the games has been hard at work, and we're really starting to like what we see.

Both versions are essentially side-scrollers that feature a mixture of acrobatics, puzzle-solving and gun-fighting. Our first impression was that they were similar to the Prince of Persia games of yore, but the fast pace and smooth motion of the famed heroine distances them from the jaunty mechanics of the POP titles.

The DS version is particularly impressive on several fronts. It's surprsing how much slick CG cutscenes and voice-over the developers have been able to stuff into a DS card—from what we can tell, virtually all of the console footage has made the leap. The in-game graphics are also better than we expected. Don't overlook the GBA version, though—the little handheld that could is still showing some impressive moves. —CHRIS S.

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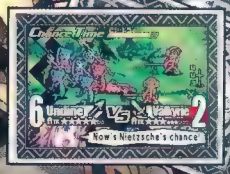

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UNRAVEL THE MYSTERY

Still have questions about Pokémon Mystery Dungeon? We have all the answers.

By Chris Shepperd

If one night you went to sleep as a human and the next morning you woke up as a Pokémon, you'd have some serious questions you'd want answered. That's the scenario in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team and Red Rescue Team, so we've assembled a Q&A guide to your new life. Of course, your first question would be, "Why me?" It's no accident that you were chosen—a very special Pokémon performed the ultimate sacrifice to save its human Trainer in the world you came from, and now it's up to you to perform a heroic act to right the wrong. Discover the reason behind the awful incidents that are afflicting the world of Pokémon, and help save your new land!

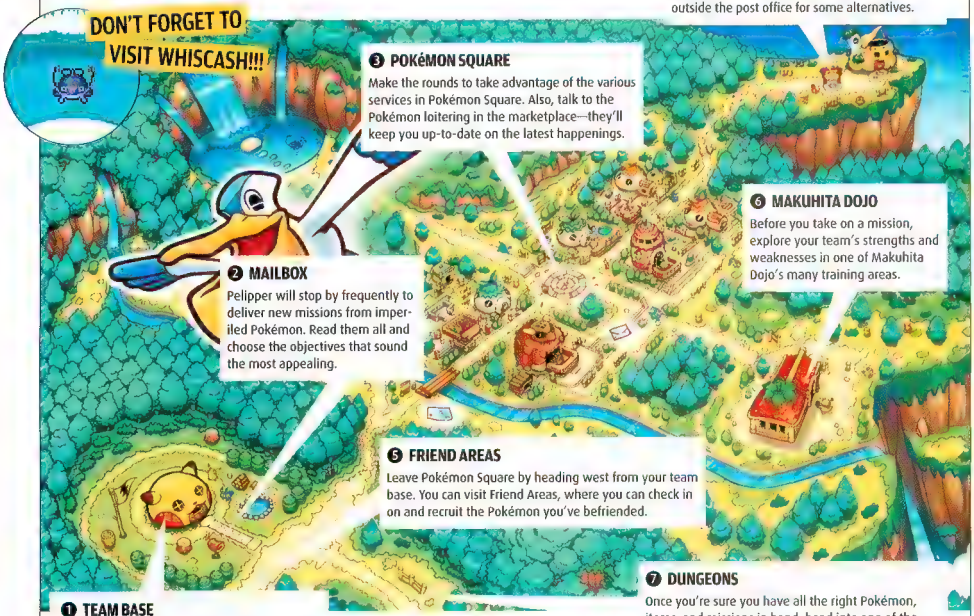
What Happened to the Trainers?

Pokémon exist in the world you came from—the world you know from previous Pokémon games. There, Trainers caught Pokémon in the wild; in fact, before you became a Pokémon, you were an apprentice Trainer. But in your newly discovered world of Pokémon, humans don't exist; the Pokémon are free to behave any way they please. With their own language and society, they don't need Trainers to help them live their lives.

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

How Should I Plan My Adventures?

There are so many places to go in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon that sometimes you'll lose track of what to do next. You should attend to various duties before every trip into a dungeon—hit the locations below in order to ensure that you're fully prepared.



❶ TEAM BASE

You'll usually begin your day at the team base. You might want to stop in one last time to save your game before heading into a dungeon.

❷ MAILBOX

Pelipper will stop by frequently to deliver new missions from imperiled Pokémon. Read them all and choose the objectives that sound the most appealing.

❸ POKÉMON SQUARE

Make the rounds to take advantage of the various services in Pokémon Square. Also, talk to the Pokémon loitering in the marketplace—they'll keep you up-to-date on the latest happenings.

❹ BULLETIN BOARD

If Pelipper delivers missions to your mailbox that aren't to your liking, check the bulletin board outside the post office for some alternatives.

❺ FRIEND AREAS

Leave Pokémon Square by heading west from your team base. You can visit Friend Areas, where you can check in on and recruit the Pokémon you've befriended.

❻ MAKUHITA DOJO

Before you take on a mission, explore your team's strengths and weaknesses in one of Makuhita Dojo's many training areas.

❼ DUNGEONS

Once you're sure you have all the right Pokémon, items, and missions in hand, head into one of the treacherous dungeons.

What Are IQ and Tactics For?

While you're exploring, you'll have full control over the actions of only your Team Leader (you). All the other Pokémon on your team are largely free to do what they feel is right. IQ Skills and tactics are two options for influencing Pokémon behavior; they make sure your teammates stay around and help you in a battle, or that they don't charge into battle when their health is low.

Get Smart

Your Pokémon teammates' IQ Skills include the ability to resist certain status conditions and improve their ability to evade attacks. After stat increases and move selection, IQ is the most important aspect to a Pokémon's growth.

GUMMIS

A Pokémon's IQ can increase only when you feed the Pokémon gummis. Further, certain types of Pokémon prefer certain types of Gummis—experiment to find out which gummis your Pokémon teammates prefer. Gummis can also bolster your Belly in a pinch, but not by much.

Smooth Moves

Tactics form the foundation of your teamate Pokémon's movement. They give the Pokémon a general idea of what it is supposed to do. For example, set a Pokémon's tactic to "Let's go together" to have it follow you wherever you go. Or assign a Pokémon the "Go after foes" tactic to make it seek out enemies aggressively. Your Pokémon will learn more tactics as they level up.

How Do I Walk Around?

For the most part, you'll move only one step at a time. You can move quickly across open rooms and down long corridors by holding the B Button, but be careful—you might not have time to prepare to engage nearby enemies. Your team heals a small amount with each turn—hold down the A and B Buttons to have turns elapse rapidly without moving.

The Benefits of Different Movement

Move through dungeons as efficiently as possible—doing so preserves steps to help keep your Belly full—and avoid unnecessary combat. Pokémon can step in eight different directions—hold down the R Button to limit a Pokémon's movement to diagonal directions only.

What's up with Recruitment?

You won't see any Poké Balls in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon. To add a Pokémon to your rescue team, you must convince it that you're worthy by besting it in battle. Only the team leader can deal the final blow to an opponent, and the leader must be adjacent to the opponent to get it to join your party.

Does Type-Matching Play a Role?

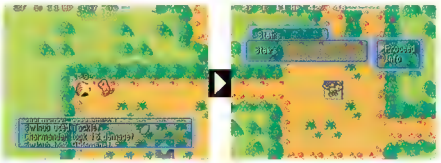
Type-matching is still an important element of battle, although it plays a slightly smaller role due to smaller multipliers. For example, Fire-type attacks still do extra damage against Grass-type Pokémon, but instead of causing double damage, they now cause only one-and-a-half times the usual damage.

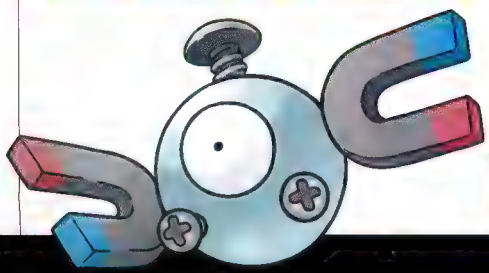
How Do I Control My Teammates' Movements?

We've already discussed tactics and IQ skills, which change your Pokémon's overall behavior. But when it comes to actual step-by-step movement, you have less control. However, your hands are not completely tied—how your leader moves can affect your teammates' positioning. Subtle maneuvers can mean the difference between success and failure in battle.

Separation Anxiety

Keep an eye on all your party members—if a teammate gets separated, both you and it are at greater risk. Pokémon will often wander off—you can change a Pokémon's tactics at any time to fix such problems. And remember, if you and your lost team member are running in circles trying to find each other, just find the stairs—the party will reunite automatically on the next level.





One Step at a Time

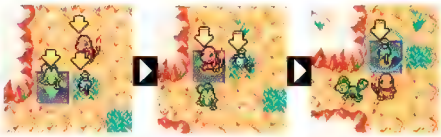
Pokémon teammates won't move until they have to. Notice in the screens that Charmander stays put when Treecko takes a step downward—only when Treecko walks farther away does Charmander catch up.

Trading Places

Fighting can be tricky in tight hallways, so knowing how your Pokémon will move is critical. When you step toward a partner Pokémon it will swap places with you, allowing it to fight an enemy in your place.

Be More Specific

Be particularly wary of walls when maneuvering your party. In the screenshot sequence, Treecko takes two moves to ensure the entire team touches the Wonder Tile to heal all the members.



What Are Some Important Items?

There are many new items in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon. Many traditional items from the Pokémon universe remain as well, but some have different effects. You'll find items scattered throughout dungeons, as well as in the shops of Pokémon Square. You'll likely use items much more frequently than ever before due to the game's unique battles and exploration.

Food Items

Every time the leader moves or uses a turn, it will consume a small amount of food in its Belly. If its Belly goes empty, the leader will lose HP every turn, and your teammates will lose attack strength during every battle. Apples are the most abundant nourishment, but there are many other types of food, as well.

Seeds

Seeds have all sorts of functions, from healing a fainted Pokémon to warping the whole team to a different floor of the dungeon. Some will even trigger a Pokémon to attack when it eats the seed. Consume the seeds that will benefit your team, and toss the bad ones at your enemies.

Orbs

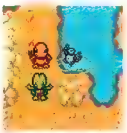
Orbs have even more mystical effects than seeds, such as changing the weather conditions or letting you acquire all the items on a particular level instantly. Certain orbs are essential, such as the Escape Orb, which warps you out of a dungeon. Unlike seeds, most orbs will benefit your team when used in the right situation.

Thrown Items

Throw items like Gravelerocks and Sticks at distant enemies to cause damage. Typically, a thrown item ignores the type of Pokémon it hits, instead just doing a fixed amount of damage. Use thrown items frequently to save PP, as well as for preemptive attacks against tough foes.

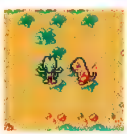
What Is a Dungeon?

The term "dungeon" is something of a misnomer—you'll often find yourself climbing mountains, navigating dense forests, or crossing icy plains. At any rate, dungeons play a greater role in your exploration and battle strategies than ever before. The dungeons are randomly generated every time you enter, so don't bother making maps. You'll need to pay close attention to the shapes of the corridors, the weather, and even the terrain.



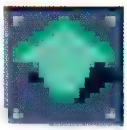
Terrain Types

The basic floor type for dungeons is normal terrain, and it's the only flooring that is defined on the map. But there are other types of terrain, as well: water, magma, and chasms. Some Pokémon can cross these terrain types from the start; all Pokémon can learn to cross them via IQ increases.



Weather Effects

Weather such as fog, snow, or hail affects Pokémon in different ways—some become stronger while others are harmed. Most of the time the weather in a dungeon is clear, which has no special effects. Weather is determined at random on a level-by-level basis.



Stairs and Wonder Tiles

Use stairs to proceed one level further into a dungeon, and stand on Wonder Tiles to rid yourself of stat-altering effects from attacks like Growl and Screech.

How Many Pokémon Can I Have in My Party?

While the absolute capacity of your rescue party is four, many dungeons will allow you to take in only three Pokémon at a time. You must have three or fewer Pokémon in your party to recruit a foe, so you'll probably want to leave an open spot in your group. Your team is also limited by the size of the Pokémon themselves—you can usually carry only one large Pokémon, such as Snorlax or Dragonite, in your party, and you can't recruit new Pokémon if your party doesn't have room to accommodate their size.

How Do I Battle?

The exploration and combat are intertwined in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon. As a result, the terrain type and positions of enemies introduces new and challenging elements to the battlefield, and moves have new factors that capitalize on the combat system.

Foe in Front

The Foe in Front range limits you to hitting adjacent foes only. You can strike diagonally, but you'll miss if you are even partially blocked by a wall.

Cuts Corners

Moves with the Diagonal range can hit diagonally even if partially blocked by a wall. These are very useful for getting the jump on foes in hallways.

Straight Line

Like thrown items, moves that have the Straight Line range fly straight and can hit a target from up to 10 spaces away (including diagonals).

Three Tiles Diagonally and in front

Moves with this range are rare but can be devastating to foes in Monster Houses, and to Pokémon who attack as a group.

Pokémon Within X-Tile Range

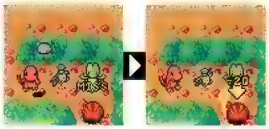
Most X-Factor moves hit all adjacent targets, but a few damage everyone within a two-square range. Note that some affect only enemies or allies.

All in Room

Moves with a range of Entire Floor hit every target in a room, plus any targets on the nearest square of a connecting hallway. If used in a hallway, they hit targets within two squares.

Hallway Combat

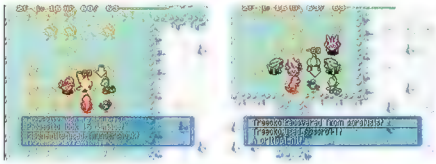
In narrow corridors, the team leader is usually the only one who can attack a foe, but that also means that only one foe can attack at a time. Remember to swap positions with adjacent partner Pokémon to get the most-effective Pokémon near the front lines.



Even if your teammates can't hit a foe directly, they can get involved in the battle. Give them Gravelerocks or similar items for them to fling at distant enemies.

Open-Room Combat

Large rooms present unique combat situations. Avoid being surrounded by groups of Pokémon; they can cut off your retreat. Stay against walls to limit the number of enemy Pokémon near you, as well. Open rooms provide the chance to use attacks like Earthquake effectively against multiple foes.

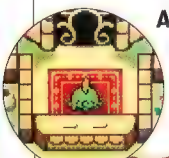


YOU'VE GOT MAIL

In addition to the seemingly endless requests for help from Pokémon, Pelipper will deliver editions of the *Pokémon News*, a daily newspaper chock-full of sound advice. Store them in your mailbox and consult them regularly.

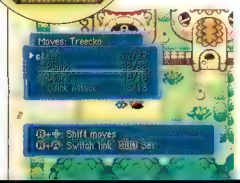
How Do Linked Moves Work?

Move linking will change the way you think about combat. You can now link together and execute multiple attacks in a single turn. When you use linked moves, PP gets taken from each move, so bring plenty of PP-regaining Max Elixirs on your journey.



All the Right Moves

By themselves, Pokémon are not able to create linked moves—visit the Gulpin Link Shop in Pokémon Square. For a small price, Gulpin will allow you to swap the order of moves, create linked moves, and relearn moves that you have forgotten. Also, if you're interested in move linking, but aren't sure where to start, check the *Pokémon News* that Pelipper delivers—sometimes it offers basic linking strategies.



LINK BOX

You don't have to visit Gulpin every time you want to link moves—use a Link Box to change your linked moves on the fly. You can use a Link Box only once before it goes away for good.

What Happened to the Pokémon Center?

Pokémon Centers have been a staple of Pokémon games from the beginning, but you won't find one in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon. All of the services that they provided are found elsewhere, or are no longer necessary. For example, all of your Pokémon are healed automatically when they leave a dungeon, and Pokémon reside in their Friend Areas instead of within the confines of a PC.

SHAMELESS PLUG FOR THE PLAYER'S GUIDE

Still have questions about Pokémon Mystery Dungeon? Get all the answers in the official player's guide from the pros at Nintendo Power.

visit www.nintendopower.com/guides/pmd

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LEGEND

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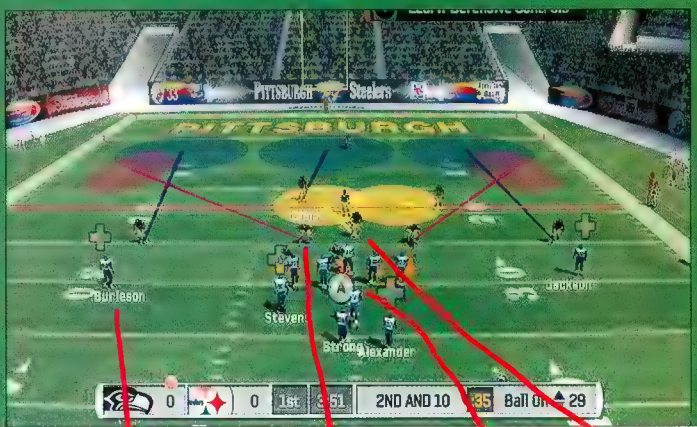
TOUCH FOOTBALL

Taking the handoff from Tiburon, EA Canada's Wii specialists are running for the end zone with Madden NFL 07.

By George Sinfield



Here's a real Madden Challenge: take EA's flagship sports franchise and reinvent its play mechanics to attract a new audience on Nintendo's Wii console. On a sunny day in the middle of the NFL preseason, Madden NFL 07's Wii producer Jason Armenise explained how the game giant intends to draw a crowd.

You've got to put on your game face to make it in the NFL.

From left to right: art director Chris Winters, associate producer Brad Paras, producer Jason Armenise, and NP staffer George Sinfield show off their armchair-quarterbacking skills.

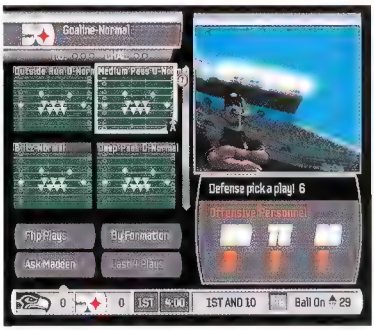
© 2006 Electronic Arts Inc.

Pulled in to the game

A common complaint about sports games is that pushing buttons is nothing like the dirt-and-sweat experience of the real thing. You don't swing a bat while playing a baseball game. You don't swat the ball while playing a basketball game. The Wii console is set to correct that disconnect with its motion-based control, and EA's Wii version of Madden NFL 07 is leading the charge. The game's key actions—passing, catching, kicking, tackling—are triggered by hand movements that relate to the sport's real moves, blurring the lines between the video game and the action onfield. When asked what it feels like to shake up the Madden franchise with a new control scheme, producer Armenise responds, "It's a little bit scary. The hard-core fans are very vocal. They've been playing Madden a specific way for a long time. But once they have the game in hand, they say, 'Wow! This is really cool.'" The game's controls map an athlete's scrambling, juking, and other whole-body movements to the nunchuk, and the actions of his limbs, such as stiff arming, throwing, kicking, and signaling for a fair catch, to the remote. All motions can be carried out through subtle flicks of the wrist, but the game is capable of interpreting bold gestures, too. "Players start off by making really big moves," says Armenise while describing how easy it is to get caught up in the action. "People comment often how much they feel pulled into the game, because they get to do things that are the movements of a real quarterback, or a receiver, or a defender."

No two players pull off the same move in exactly the same way. And in the heat of the moment, any gesture can be less than graceful. For those reasons, the developers have established "smart" moves, which interpret the player's intentions. "If you want to do a stiff-arm (a swipe to the left or right) and it's just, you know, like this," Armenise says, shaking the controller in both directions, "we determine through the situation what it is that you want to do. Then we [have the athlete] do the stiff-arm (left or right) that we think is the best move." Optional onscreen feedback lets you know how the game interprets your moves. Tutorials are another big help. When a message at the bottom of the screen prompts you to learn an action, you can stop in the middle of the game and practice the move as much as you want before you continue play.

Pull back on the remote to snap the ball. Wait for the intended receiver to get out into the open, then let the ball sail with a quick forward flick. You'll begin your march down the field.



For those who don't know every play by formation, the default setting sorts by play type. After you pick the general shape of the play, you'll see options from several types of formations.

KICKING

Upright Upswing

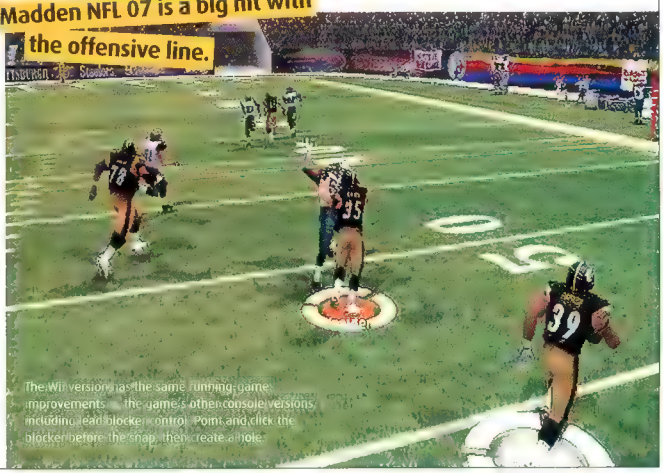
Starting with the remote pointing at the ground, press the A Button then swing upward. The force of your swing will determine the power of your kick.

PASSING

Onward, Forward

Select the receiver with the remote's A Button or Control Pad, then thrust forward to pull off a pass. Depending on the force, you'll throw a bullet, a normal pass, or a lob.

Madden NFL 07 is a big hit with the offensive line.



The Wii version has the same running-game improvements as the game's other console versions, including lead blocker control. Point and click the blocker before the snap, then create a hole.

The Expansion of Fun

If you ever have the chance to play Madden NFL 07 against Jason Armenise, you should know that he blitzes on almost every play. Inside info is useful because you need every advantage you can muster to beat your opponent in a multiplayer game. Though the single-player game has all of the features that you expect from a Madden title, including NFL Superstar mode and a full-on Franchise mode, the Wii development team has put a huge focus on making the multiplayer experience as competitive as possible. It starts with play selection. While using the remote as a pointer to sift through plays on the screen, you usually press the A Button to commit to a play. If you fear that your opponent is spying on your play-calling process, though, you can select the play by pressing the B Button (on the bottom of the remote) then continue to look at other plays, pressing the A Button when you arrive at the one that you want your opponent to think that you've called. If you're playing a co-op game, your partner's remote will vibrate when you call the play you're actually going to run.

The deception continues during the play. "Since you're making gestures to snap and pass, your friend could be watching you out of the corner of his eye and see what you're doing," warns Armenise. "So we needed the ability to fake people out." While pulling back to indicate that you want to hike the ball, you can press the B Button to execute a hard count instead. "When you do that, and the person on defense comes across the line, then you can snap the ball for real, and you'll have a free penalty. That's a big-time fake." A similar move—pressing the B Button while motioning to pass—triggers a pump fake. The quarterback will thrust his arm forward, but he won't let go of the ball.

Once the play is in motion, two players can team up to increase one athlete's running ability. When the offensive player who is not controlling the ball carrier presses the 1 Button, he'll provide a speed boost to his partner. The faster he pumps the remote and nunchuk, the faster the ball carrier will go.

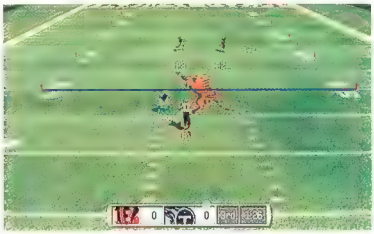
Another part of the development team's efforts to encourage multiplayer participation is the inclusion of three

CATCHING

Catch Up

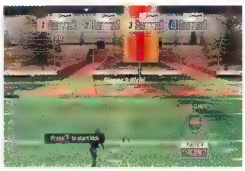
On offense or defense, an upward reach with both hands will increase your chances of plucking the ball from the air.

2 on 2 Minigame

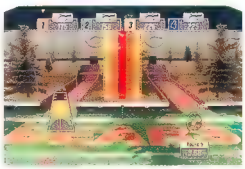


Four athletes face off in a narrowed field for a two-on-two match. Each team has four downs to make it to the end zone.

Kicking Combine Minigame

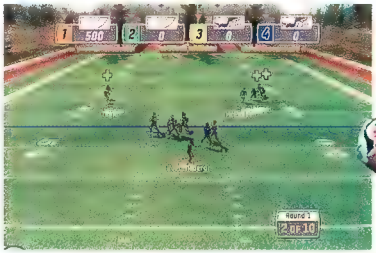


The Kicking Combine game puts the pressure on you to kick the ball through the uprights. With every success, the ball is placed farther out.



By manipulating their Control Sticks and pumping their controllers, all participants can influence the direction and speed of the wind.

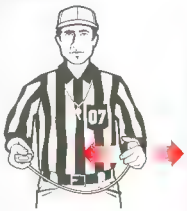
Y.A.C. Attack Minigame



The Y.A.C. (Yards After Completion) Attack game rotates players into the quarterback position, challenging them to pass then run.

A defender gets points for stopping his man, and even more points for stopping another defender's man.

JUKING



Juke 'til you Puke

Move the nunchuk quickly left, right, or back. The ball carrier will respond with a juke in the desired direction, hopefully sending defenders to the turf.

Free and clear and heading for six, show your stuff with a high-stepping strut.

STIFF-ARMING

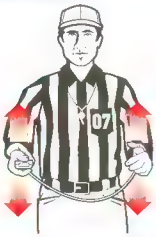
Talk to the Hand

There's nothing more effective for breaking a tackle then a well-timed sideways slide of the remote.

satellite games exclusive to the Wii version. Each one focuses on a different aspect of the sport. The Kicking Combine game, for example, lets each participant try his hand at kicking field goals through several rounds. The Y.A.C. Attack game pits one offensive player against up to three players on defense in an effort to pass the ball, then earn yards after completion. The 2 on 2 game is a simulation of schoolyard football that gives teammates the ability to communicate with each other through button presses that make each other's controller vibrate. During a multiplayer session, the room comes alive with teamwork, taunts, and lots of showboating—from high steps in the red zone to a variety of motion-triggered touchdown celebrations. "We love four people playing this game," says Armenise. "Four people playing is ideal for us. We think that's where you're going to see the expansion of fun."

Arms fly in the living room while bodies fly onscreen. He who gets the last hit will win the war between ball carrier and defender.

QUIETING THE CROUD



Homefield Advantage

If you're on the home team, the fans will respond to your gestures. Move the remote and nunchuk up and down to quiet the spectators down, or pump them up.

Looks Great. Let's Play.

Much can be made of the Wii's control methods and the way that the Wii version of Madden NFL 07 takes advantage of them, but you can't overlook the game's visual improvements, either. "If you're going to make a game for Wii, you better come hard with your controls. There's no doubt about that," explains Armenise. "At the same time, we really want to improve the graphics." The game is compatible with widescreen HDTV format, and runs at 60 frames per second. It also employs twice the number of textures as the Nintendo GameCube version, presents more-realistic lighting and shadows, and keeps the models at a higher polygon count when they are far away from the camera. The team is also proud of a new realistic treatment of grass, which seems like a small thing until you realize that you look at grass for most of the game. Armenise sums up the art improvements with what he hopes will be most players' reaction: "You go, 'Wow. Madden looks great this year. Let's play.'"

It's not over when you reach the end zone. The touchdown celebration is your finishing move.

GOING BANANAS

Sega's pantsless primates roll onto Wii with a fresh single-player mode and a bunch of new minigames in Super Monkey Ball: Banana Blitz.

By Steve Thomason

We were wondering what happened to Grape Ape.

RAISING THE (MONKEY) BAR

The original Super Monkey Ball was probably the biggest surprise of the GameCube launch. A beefed-up port of a moderately successful arcade game, its quirky simians and easy-to-understand but difficult-to-master gameplay proved incredibly addicting, and lured legions of early adopters to its potassium-rich shenanigans. This fall, Sega hopes to rekindle that monkey love when they debut the latest installment of the franchise alongside Nintendo's next console.

It starts with a collection of all-new puzzle boards. For the uninitiated, your objective in Super Monkey Ball's single-player mode is to steer your encapsulated primate toward the goal by tilting the stage itself—sort of like one of those handheld gizmos where you try to roll the marble into a hole. Whereas previous games accomplished this by having you manipulate an analog stick, Banana Blitz allows you to tilt the Wii remote, providing a more direct connection to what's happening onscreen. The controls were a bit oversensitive in the demo on display at E3, but they've since been tweaked, and felt quite a bit better during our most recent playtest.

Playing Monkey Ball with the remote still takes some getting used to, but once you do, it feels like a natural evolution of the franchise.

There are eight themed worlds in Banana Blitz (plus additional worlds that you can unlock), each consisting of eight puzzle stages and a boss. That's right, for the first time in series history, you'll face off against a kong-sized adversary at the end of each world. To take 'em down, you'll often need to use the new jump function (either by flicking the remote or pressing the A Button) to catch some air and nail their weak points. These baddies, which range from a Captain-Ahab-meets-Edward-Scissorhands gorilla to a snowball-tossing sasquatch, lend the single player festivities a bit of extra variety (and weirdness) and will put your monkey ballin' skills to the ultimate test.

To combat these forces of evil, two new monkeys are joining the family: Doctor, a bespectacled primate with a luxurious mustache, and Yan Yan, a young female monkey sporting pigtails and a raccoon-like tail. The usual suspects—AiAi, Baby, GonGon, and MeeMee—return as well.

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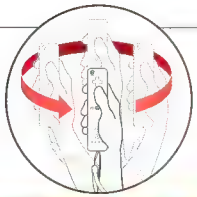
Monkey vs. Vulture: good luck catching this dream match on the Discovery Channel.

PARTY ANIMALS

Of course, Monkey Ball wouldn't be Monkey Ball without a rousing assortment of multiplayer minigames. For Banana Blitz, developer Amusement Vision intends to offer the largest number of minigames to date by utilizing the Wii controller in just about every way the team can think of. While they haven't committed to a final number yet, they've already experimented with over 30 different activities—some using the Wii remote and nunchuk, some using only the remote. Here's a sneak peak at seven of the trousers-optional diversions that will make it into the final game.

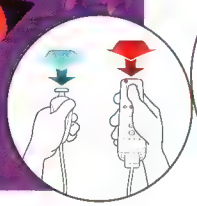
HAMMER THROW

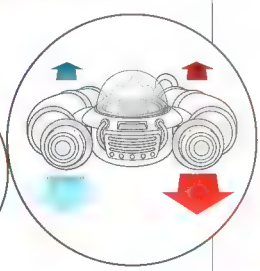
Hold down the B Trigger and spin the remote to build up momentum; then let go of the trigger at the right moment to let 'er fly. Whoever tosses the hammer the greatest distance without going out of bounds wins.



ALIEN ATTACK

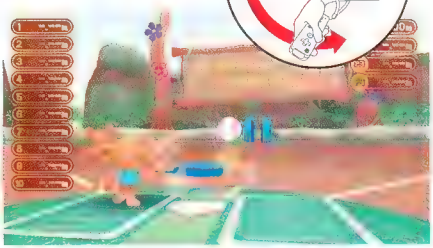
Monkeys in space! Your alien assault vehicle steers like a tank: you tilt the nunchuk forward and back to control the left booster, and you tilt the remote to control the right booster. Your goal is to blast as many extraterrestrials as possible in the time alotted.





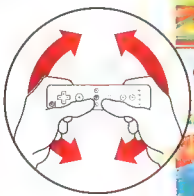
HOME RUN DERBY

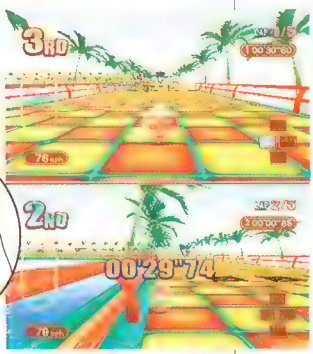
This one is pretty intuitive. You just swing the Wii remote as you would a baseball bat to launch the ball out of the park.



MONKEY RACE

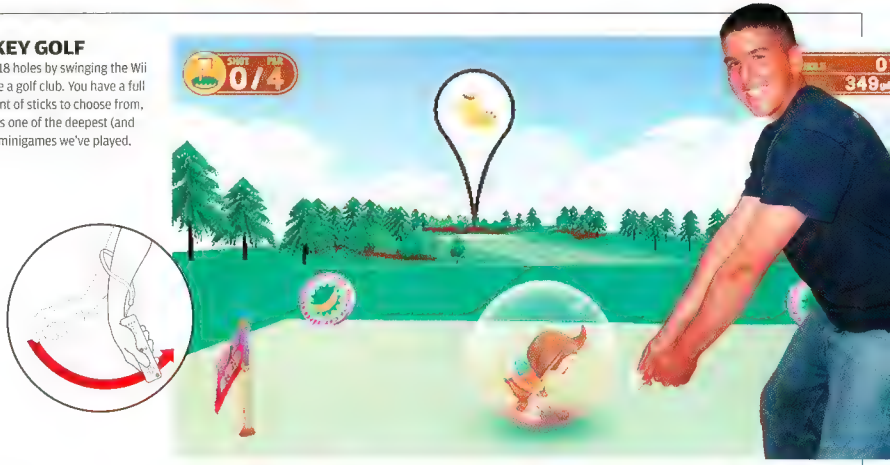
Race against your fellow monkeys by holding the Wii remote sideways and using it like a steering wheel. Of course, you can pick up a variety of items to wreak havoc on your competitors.





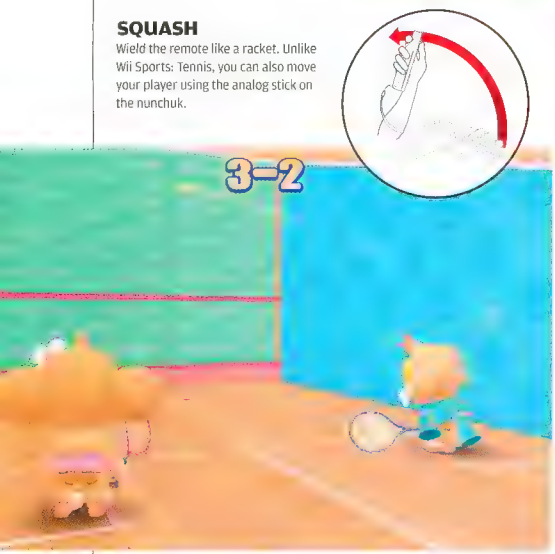
MONKEY GOLF

Play a full 18 holes by swinging the Wii remote like a golf club. You have a full complement of sticks to choose from, making this one of the deepest (and most fun) minigames we've played.



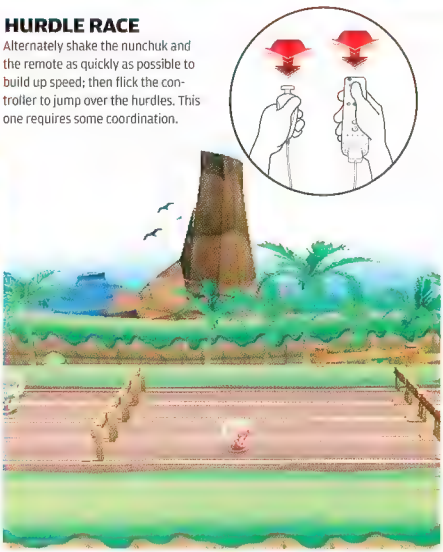
SQUASH

Wield the remote like a racket. Unlike Wii Sports: Tennis, you can also move your player using the analog stick on the nunchuk.



HURDLE RACE

Alternately shake the nunchuk and the remote as quickly as possible to build up speed; then flick the controller to jump over the hurdles. This one requires some coordination.



DAMN DIRTY APES

Five Reasons Monkeys Will One Day Rule the Earth

From Donkey Kong to Bonzo, our simian friends have provided us with endless hours of entertainment. But one day . . . oh, one day. Here are five warning signs that monkeys will eventually take over the planet:

1. They don't waste time on human frivolities (like pants).

2. They tore off that dude's nose in California because he wouldn't give them any more *cake*.

3. They eat "the world's perfect food." We eat Big Macs.

4. They traveled into space before we did and likely forged an alliance with our future alien oppressors.

5. Charlton Heston is getting too old to protect us.

Pirates! Band Together for Battle!

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PlayStation.2

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

Games

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Heroes in Your Hands

With the biggest bunch of superheros ever assembled in one game, Activision's Marvel: Ultimate Alliance lets you serve up a heapin' helping of hurt on Wii. By George Sinfield

Crouching, concentrating, and moving both hands in a rapid-fire rhythm, Spider-Man launches a salvo of web bullets while Captain America—arms raised high—commands his flying shield, and Ghost Rider and the Human Torch conjure their powers to burn through Dr. Doom's minions. . . or if you prefer Thor, Wolverine, the Thing, and Blade bust up the baddies. In Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, you have the keys to the superhero kingdom; there are two dozen controllable characters at your disposal, all of them ready to rock with motion-controlled super powers that are triggered by slashes and swipes of the Wii remote.

Up to four players guide a retoolable team of four heroes though 17 locations on the way to the ultimate meeting with Dr. Doom. Of course, other well-known villains stand in the way, as well—the likes of Rhino, Scorpion, Shocker, Thunderball, Bulldozer, Piledriver, Mysterio, and Dragon Man. Then, there are the really big guys, like the multistory monster Galactus and the giant Ymir—villains that it'll take teamwork and puzzle-solving to defeat.

Developed by Vicarious Visions and designed by Raven Software, the game follows the basic framework of Raven's X-Men Legends and X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse (both published by Activision). The heroes mix it up in one battle after the next. The longer a particular hero stays in the fight, and the more a team stays together, the stronger and more superpowered the participants become. It's part action, part RPG, and all Marvel—and the heroic-move-gesturing excitement that it generates is made possible by the Wii console.

Who Wants to Be a Superhero?

You may have played the role of Spider-Man, Wolverine, or Mr. Fantastic in a game before, but the Wii control scheme brings you one step closer to actually *becoming* your favorite Marvel hero. You guide the selected good guy's movement with the nunchuk's Control Stick and use the remote to pull off a full slate of normal and special attacks. A flick to the left or right launches a punch or kick. An upward motion calls for an uppercut. A downward slice signals a smashing of the fists, and a thrust results in a forward lunge. To trigger more-powerful attacks, you perform the same motions as you hold the B Button.

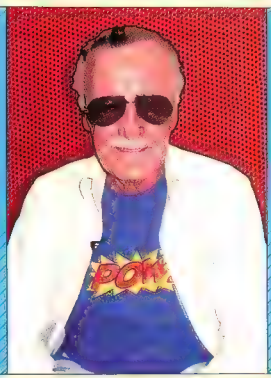
Players on other consoles must select moves from a list and assign them to a limited number of buttons. The Wii's freeform control, however, allows far more variety than a button-driven controller does, so every attack option is available at all times. Additional moves have the heroes grabbing their opponents (by pressing the Z Button) and stealing their weapons (by shaking the remote). Even though the attack moves for all heroes are achieved through the same gestures, don't think for a second that controlling one hero is the same as controlling the next. Each character has specialized moves and abilities that make him unique. Some (such as Thor) are able to fly, while Spider-Man can swing on his webbing. Others have powerful projectile attacks, like the Human Torch's flames and Iceman's freezing blasts. You can sample each character's unique abilities by switching control on the fly or by reconfiguring your team between missions.

A combination of gestures and button presses will power your quartet past every encounter with style.

The King of Comics

STAN LEE HAS CARVED OUT A PLACE IN COMIC-BOOK HISTORY BY CREATING SOME OF ITS MOST ENDURING HEROES. ANDY MYERS CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AT COMIC-CON TO DISCUSS MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE.

STAN'S THE MAN. 'NUFF SAID.



ALTHOUGH LEE, AT 83, MAY NOT POSSESS THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF HIS CREATIONS, HE WAS GREETED AS A HERO AT COMIC-CON. HIS ENTHUSIASM FOR ULTIMATE ALLIANCE STEMS FROM ITS IMPRESSIVE LINEUP OF MARVEL COMICS STARS.

Group Dynamics

Marvel superheros excel at teaming up to fight bad guys. Sure, there are some loners, but most heroes eventually discover that when they're taking on the really tough villains, it pays to have friends. In Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, a team that sticks together earns team bonuses that accelerate the process of powering up. Cohesive teams also collect costumes that identify them as a unit. You can form your own superhero squad, or select a preset group, such as the Fantastic Four, the lesser known New Fantastic Four, the Marvel Classic team, and a squad made entirely of X-Men. All told, you'll be able to select from 20 characters at the outset, 16 of which have already been announced: Blade, Captain America, Dr. Strange, Electra, Ghost Rider, the Human Torch, Iceman, the Invisible Woman, Iron Man, Luke Cage, Mr. Fantastic, Spider-Man, Storm, the Thing, Thor, and Wolverine. Additionally, you'll find two unlockable characters—Nick Fury and the Silver Surfer. Activision will announce more playable characters in the coming weeks.

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN IS A REAL TEAM PLAYER.

HEROES HAVE A RANGE OF SPECIALTIES FROM POWER TO PROJECTILES.

The game's characters were selected for inclusion based on their popularity, the combat mechanics that each hero brings to the table, and the role that each character plays in the story. Because a battle against Mandarin is in the cards, it only makes sense that Iron Man, his nemesis, should be among the game's heroes. And what would be a fight versus Loki be without Thor on your side?

NPCs also contribute to the story. Among them are Jean Grey, Nightcrawler, Black Widow, Gorgon, and Professor X. Lilandra, known to X-Men fans, figures into a storyline that centers around collecting a M'kraan Crystal. Uatu the Watcher is part of a plot twist that you'll have to witness to believe. All told, 140 Marvel characters make appearances. That's a record for a Marvel Comics-based game, and it isn't likely to be broken soon.

Classic Clashes

The game is set in the Marvel Ultimate universe, an alternate reality that reconfigures some of the characters' relationships and origins. Devoted readers of the *Ultimate* comic books will recognize some of the storylines and battles, and may be able to predict a few of the game's twists. At key points in the story, you will choose between two branches that offer different missions. In other situations, missions are optional. While leaving Atlantis, for example, you can either turn back and save the underwater world from a new threat, or leave and let the citizens fend for themselves.

Team configurations affect the dialogue that passes between team members and NPCs. When a group that includes Iceman faces Ymir, for instance, the monster and Iceman have a different conversation than Ymir would have with another hero. All of the possible team configurations, story branches, and dialogue tracks contribute to the game's replayability.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance is an ambitious adventure, and one that you won't want to take on without a Wii controller in hand. The game is set to break onto the scene this fall.

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ROLE-PLAYING PARTY

Want to assemble the strongest handheld RPG lineup around? Look no further than DS and Game Boy Advance.

By Chris Hoffman

This fall is shaping up to be the most prolific season ever for portable RPGs. With **Children of Mana**, **FINAL FANTASY III**, and **Magical Starsign** coming to DS, plus **FINAL FANTASY V Advance**, **Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2**, and **Yggdra Union** on the way to GBA (and also playable on DS), the choices have never been more promising or varied. Read on for all the info you need to build your own RPG dream team.

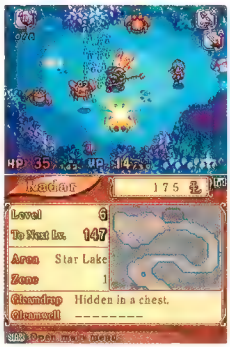
Children of Mana

LOCATION: DS | JOINS PARTY: 10/2006 | USER LEVEL: Everyone 10+

CLASS: BERSERKER

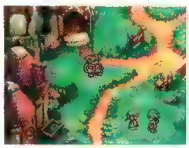
Background

The latest installment in Square Enix's legendary Mana action-RPG series—which rose to prominence with 1993's Secret of Mana on the SNES—emphasizes chaotic real-time combat. Up to four players can take part in the full quest.



Strengths

When you combine four players, four different playable characters, four different weapons (each with primary and secondary attacks), eight elemental spirit partners, tons of enemies, and "ricochet reaction" physics, the result is a carnage-filled button-mashing spectacle. You can use hundreds of equippable gems to customize your character, and the hand-drawn graphics and anime cut-scenes look great, too.



Vulnerabilities

Each player needs a game card to enjoy multiplayer mode, so make sure your slacker friends get their own copies of the game.

STATISTICS

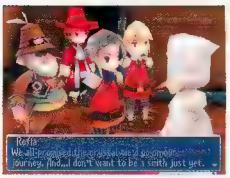
FINAL FANTASY III

LOCATION: DS | JOINS PARTY: 11/2006 | USER LEVEL: Everyone 10+

CLASS: MODERN LEGEND

Background

FINAL FANTASY III was originally released on the Japanese Famicom in 1990, and it's the one game in the series that never made it to North America. But now this lost classic is coming to DS with loads of enhancements.

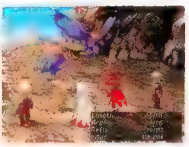


Strengths

The third chapter in the beloved franchise introduced some of the series' most popular features, like a job system (which provides tons of character abilities) and summon spells. Now the game's better than ever thanks to a more-fleshed-out story, revamped 3-D visuals, improved audio, optional touch-screen controls, and more. You can even send "Mognet" messages to other players over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

Vulnerabilities

Folks who've been under a rock for the last decade may think they already own FINAL FANTASY III on the SNES, but that's a completely different game.



STATISTICS

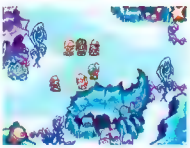
MAGICAL STARSIGN

LOCATION: DS | JOINS PARTY: 10/2006 | USER LEVEL: Everyone

CLASS: GALACTIC MAGE

Background

What are starsigns? They're the elemental affinities of the characters in Magical Starsign. Even though the game's GBA predecessor, Magical Vacation, never made it out of Japan, players will have no trouble enjoying this upbeat adventure.



Your magical journey will take you to planets with wildly varied environments and inhabitants.

Strengths

With its whimsical visual style and lighthearted story—about six young magic-academy students embarking on a galaxy-spanning quest to save their teacher—Magical Starsign stands out from the RPG pack. Flashy magical powers are an integral part of battle, plus you can use them outside of combat to solve puzzles. The game also takes full advantage of the DS, with dual-screen boss battles and full touch-screen control.

Vulnerabilities

Players expecting the same old thing won't find it here. Angsty, fancy-haired heroes? No. Communities of moles in which everyone's named after cheese? Yes.

STATISTICS

FINAL FANTASY V ADVANCE

LOCATION: GBA | JOINS PARTY: 11/2006 | USER LEVEL: Everyone

CLASS: TRADITIONALIST

Background

Often regarded as the most hard-core game in the series, FINAL FANTASY V hit the Super Famicom in 1992, but didn't come to North America until the 32-bit era. The GBA version stays true to the original, but sports several improvements.

Strengths

Though FINAL FANTASY V Advance uses a job system similar to that of FINAL FANTASY III, the fifth chapter lets you mix job abilities for hundreds of customization options. And even if you've played the game before, the Advance edition boasts a vastly improved translation, a brand-new 30-level Sealed Ruin bonus dungeon, and four new job classes: Necromancer, Bomber, Gladiator, and Prophet.

Vulnerabilities

This fall will be a great time to be a FINAL FANTASY fan. Hopefully FINAL FANTASY V won't get lost in the shadow of its DS cousin.

STATISTICS

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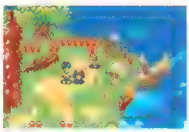
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2

LOCATION: GBA | JOINS PARTY: 10/2006 | USER LEVEL: Teen

CLASS: WEAPONSMITH

Background

The first Summon Night: Swordcraft Story hit store shelves only a couple of months ago, but the significantly more ambitious sequel is hot on its trail. The game's big hooks are side-view real-time battles and the ability to craft 200 types of weapons.



The visuals in Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2 are bolder, brighter, and more colorful than in its predecessor.

Strengths

Swordcraft Story 2 aims to improve upon its predecessor in every respect. You can once again choose from a male or female protagonist and select from four distinct Guardian Beast partners, but now the environments are more varied, the story is deeper, and the weapon-forging system has been refined. The ability to use weapons outside of battle to interact with the environment adds a lot of depth.

Vulnerabilities

The Summon Night name doesn't have the pedigree of other RPG series. Fans that stick to only the big titles may miss out.

STATISTICS

Yggdra Union

LOCATION: GBA | JOINS PARTY: 10/2006 | USER LEVEL: Rating Pending

CLASS: TACTICIAN

Background

From the makers of cult-hit Riviera: The Promised Land comes Yggdra Union, a strategy-RPG that tells the story of deposed Princess Yggdra and her army of unlikely allies as they wage war against the invading Bronquia Empire.

Strengths

Yggdra Union boasts fantastic character designs and an incredibly deep card-based battle system. In addition to featuring genre staples like varied character classes (thieves, valkyries, sorcerers, and more) and weapon attributes, the game is built around the ability to unite your forces into a cohesive army through smart unit positioning. Troop morale and managing your forces' aggression levels also factor into claiming victory.

Vulnerabilities

If you're an all-brawn-and-no-brains type of adventurer, Yggdra Union will chew you up and spit you out way faster than you can pronounce "Yggdra."

STATISTICS

Building a Bigger Party

In addition to the games represented on the preceding pages, there are loads of other games available to swell your DS and GBA role-playing ranks. Many are already available, and others are on the way.

RECENT RELEASES:

Age of Empire: Age of Kings	Majesco	DS
Battles of Prince of Persia	Ubisoft	DS
Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe	Buena Vista Games	DS, GBA
Contact	Atlus	DS
Deep Labyrinth	Atlus	DS
Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime	Square Enix	DS
Final Fantasy IV Advance	Nintendo	GBA
LostMagic	Ubisoft	DS
Lunar: Dragon Song	Ubisoft	DS
Mage Knight: Destiny's Soldier	Namco Bandai	DS
Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time	Nintendo	DS
Mega Man Battle Network 6	Capcom	GBA
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Blue Rescue Team	Nintendo	DS
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Red Rescue Team	Nintendo	GBA
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story	Atlus	GBA
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation	Atlus	GBA
Tales of Phantasia	Nintendo	GBA
Tao's Adventure: Curse of the Demon Seal	Konami	DS

COMING SOON

Etrian Odyssey	Atlus	DS
Digimon World DS	Namco Bandai	DS
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	DS
Final Fantasy VI Advance	Nintendo	GBA
Inuyasha: Secret of the Divine Jewel	Namco Bandai	DS
Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja	Atlus	DS
Lunar Knights	Konami	DS
Pokémon Ranger	Nintendo	DS
Spectrobes	Buena Vista Games	DS
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2	Atlus	GBA

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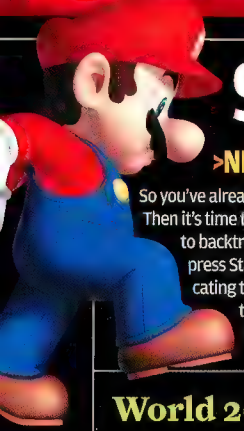

Super Challenge

>NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.

So you've already saved the princess, conquered all 80 levels, and collected all 240 Star Coins in New Super Mario Bros.? Then it's time to see what you're really made of in the game's secret challenge mode. Challenge mode restricts your ability to backtrack (a la the original Super Mario Bros.), and it functions only after you've beat the game once; to activate it, press Start to pause the game while you're on any world map, then press L, R, L, R, X, X, Y, Y. You'll get a message indicating that secret challenge mode has been activated, and a red arrow will appear in the upper-right corner of the top screen. (The arrow will turn gray when you position Mario on a level where the code has no effect.) Just in case challenge mode gets a bit too challenging, here are a few tips for some of the trickiest areas.

World 2-Fort

You can't go down once you've gone up in the World 2 fortress, so instead of letting the circular lifts carry you at the beginning of the level, you'll have to jump from platform to platform. Be sure not to fall from the red rotating blocks near the stage's end.

World 3-A

You'll get trapped if you try to hit the switch to create platforms near the middle of 3-A, so you'll have to use a perfectly timed jump off a Skeeter to reach the ledge. Use a Mini-Mushroom to make the jump easier.

World 6-4

When you see the outline of a small platform in the first area of 6-4, that's your cue to wall-jump to the ledge above; if you try to hit the switch instead, you'll have to restart the level. In the second area, you must proceed down the ledges and head right, then make a small leap of faith to reach the green pipe at the end.

World 7-A

Surviving in World 7-A depends on your going through only the correct pipes. When you reach the pair of pipes above the green platform, take the left pipe or you'll lose a life. Further into the level, as you're jumping from pipe to pipe, don't accidentally drop through one of them or Mario will perish.

Creature Comforts

>OVER THE HEDGE (GCN)

Life's not always easy when you're considered vermin, so power up and access the game's unlockables with these codes. Any time during the game, press Start to pause, then hold L and R and input the button sequence corresponding to the desired cheat. When you release L and R, you'll get a message that says "Code Enabled" to signify correct code entry. Input the code again to disable it.

[redacted]
Y X Y X Y B

[redacted]
Y X Y X B X

[redacted]
Y X Y X B Y

[redacted]
Y X Y B B X

[redacted]
Y X Y X X B

Unlock All Minigames:
Y X Y Y Y B

[redacted]
Y X B B X Y

[redacted] Bonus Comic #2 (Original [redacted]
Y Y B X B X

Get Carded

>MADDEN NFL 07 (GCN)

The latest edition of Madden features tons of Madden Cards to collect, some of which provide extra bonuses to improve your game; these codes will let you access a few of them. From the Madden Cards screen in the My Madden menu, select Madden codes and enter the code of your choice to obtain a card. Use the card during a game to help you play like a pro.

Lame Duck
Your opponent will throw only lob passes for a half, allowing you to get into better position for interceptions and deflections.

5LAWO0

QB On Target
This card gives your quarterback 100 percent accuracy for a half, ensuring that all your passes will be right on target.

WROA0R

Mistake Free
When you use this card, you won't fumble the ball or throw any interceptions for an entire half.

XL7SP1

Scary Secrets

>MONSTER HOUSE (GCN)

How do three kids survive inside the bowels of a big, scary, person-eating house? By using these codes, naturally. You can activate the codes at any time during gameplay by holding down L and R and quickly inputting the button sequence corresponding to the desired cheat.

Restore Current Character to Full Health: **A, A, A, Y**

Refill Current Character's Secondary Weapon Ammo: **Y, Y, A, A**

Unlock All Gun Upgrades for All Characters:
B, Y, B, A, B, X, B, B

Obtain All Toy Monkeys and Unlock Art Gallery Images:
Y, X, Y, X, B, B, B, A

BACK IN BLACK? PRETTY IN PINK?

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November 2006

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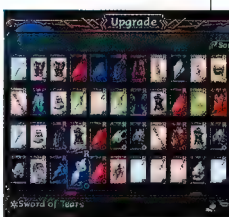
ART OF THE DEAL

Lost in the shuffle of Baten Kaitos Origins? Let us help you get your Magnus in order.

By Andy Myers

Mixing Things Up

Baten Kaitos: Eternal Wings and the Lost Ocean introduced us to a clever RPG system in which an item's essence (or Magnus) could be captured onto a card. Baten Kaitos Origins for GCN ups the ante by allowing players to mix the collected Quest Magnus in various ways and for various reasons. Below are three common examples of how Magnus mixing can play to your advantage as you traverse BKO's massive world.



Finding Magnus

Pots, bookshelves, wells—you can collect Magnus virtually anywhere. Some Magnus can even be used for multiple purposes. Flame Ice, for instance, can cool your party in the desert for easier travel, as well as upgrade certain Battle Magnus (weapons and armor). In this example, we've mixed Flame Ice with a Frozen Suit to create the Diamond Suit.

Holding Magnus

In the first Baten Kaitos game, holding on to some Quest Magnus for too long would cause them to spoil. The same is true in BKO, except you can now use the spoiled goods to your advantage. Here we've mixed Rotten Food (once Pow Meat) with the Heat Club to create a new weapon, Poison Heat.

Mixing Mixed Magnus

Things get more complicated when you mix Quest Magnus within your inventory (see page 72), then combine the concoction with a Battle Magnus at one of the game's shops. For instance, the Welkinsire Cap mixes with a Lightning Shroom (originally two Jolt Shrooms) to create the Big Thunder Hat.

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Recommended Upgrades

To survive Baten Kaitos Origins, you'll need the biggest, baddest arsenal the game has to offer. But to obtain the most powerful weapons and armor, you'll have to put in some serious hours experimenting with BKO's upgrade system. To upgrade a weapon, you must mix a Battle Magnus with the right Quest Magnus at one of the game's many shops. Each time you reach a new town, visit the town's shop to see which Magnus can be upgraded; if you're carrying the Quest Magnus necessary for the upgrade, the weapon or armor will be highlighted. (Most Battle Magnus can only be upgraded at one or two specific shops in the entire world.) And the more powerful the weapon or armor, the more difficult it will be to upgrade. Due to limited space in your Quest Magnus inventory, it would be nearly impossible to find every upgrade in the game. To save you some time, we've put together a list of weapons and armor no party should be without.

Crystal Blue

Once you find a common **Crystal Cudgel**, mix it with **Pristine Water** at the Mintaka shop to create a superior Crystal Blue.

Valor Shield

This defensive armor is powerful, easy to make, and can be used by anyone. To create the Valor Shield, visit the shop in Mintaka and mix a **Battle Shield** with a **Boulder**.

Meteor Sophia

Mixing a **Mars Sophia** with a **Blaze** at the shop in Mintaka will earn you a Meteor Sophia. When used in battle, this weapon will lower an enemy's resistance to sleep.

Efreeti Blade

You can forge this powerful fire-based sword at the shop in Algorab by mixing an **Efreeti Saber** with a **Fireglow Stone**. (For the Fireglow Stone recipe, consult page 72.)

Frozen Edge

This sword does wonders for an Ice-themed deck, as it lowers its victim's resistance to freezing. To forge a Frozen Edge, visit the shop in Algorab and mix a **Frozen Sword** with **Sparkling Snow**.

Astratheos

The powerful Astratheos lasts a full 16 hits and is undoubtedly the best weapon Milly can wield. To create it, mix a **Wild God** with a **Lightning Shroom** at the shop in Vega.

Excalibur

The nasty Excalibur sword is a must-have near the end of the game. Visit the shop in Gemma and mix an **Alondite** with a rare **Celestial Tree** (see the Celestial Tree recipe on page 72.)

Sacrosanct Robes

The Crucifix Robes is by far the best armor for Guillo, and its recipe is fairly simple: mix a **Sublime Garb** with a **Boulder** at the shop in Algorab.

Sophic Guardian

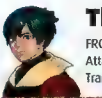
To get your hands on a Sophic Guardian you must visit the shop in Algorab, and mix a **Fair Guardian** with **Light Powder**. (Light Powder changes forms when held too long.)

Golden Knightshelm

To don the most powerful piece of armor in the game, you'll have to take on the arduous task of mixing a **Golden Helm** with a **Celestial Tree** at the shop in Vega.

Sweet Combos

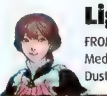
As you battle enemies throughout BKO's world, you'll discover a number of character-specific Magnus combinations known as EX Combos. Some EX Combos are simple, while others require some know-how and hard-to-find cards. Below are three particularly powerful combos to keep in mind when building a deck. (All three require building your MP Gauge to five, then pressing Y to burst.)



The Apotheosis

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Weak Attack, Medium Attack, Strong Attack, Scension, Ascension, Transcension, The Godling's Rapture

Once you receive The Godling's Rapture Magnus, set up your deck to unleash The Apotheosis. (Note: in order for the combo to work, the first three cards cannot be Attack B Magnus.)



Lightning Turkey II

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Weak Attack B, Medium Attack, Strong Attack B, Sevenstar Dust, Rising Condor, Open Your Eyes

One of Milliard's most effective combos, Lightning Turkey II, showers all enemies with a cataclysmic lighting storm.

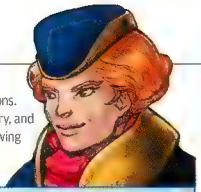
Black Yang

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Ghostarrow, Wickedwing Revels, Shadowflame Engine

Black Yang allows Sagi to let loose an especially nasty flurry of attacks. This EX Combo is nice because it doesn't require any Attack cards, opening opportunities for Relay combos.

Recipes For Success

The importance of collecting and combining Quest Magnus goes beyond upgrading your weapons. Certain Magnus mixes can give you advantages in battle simply by having them in your inventory, and some are even required to advance the story. The following chart details every mix recipe, allowing you to assess the value of your Quest Magnus and save yourself many a headache.



001	Drinking Water + Drinking Water = Pristine Water	Raises allies' resistance to Fire; used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
002	Stale Water + Stale Water = Drinking Water	Slightly raises allies' resistance to Fire; used in story; used to upgrade weapons
003	Blaze + Pretty Stone = Fireglow Stone	Boosts Fire defense; used to upgrade weapons and armor
004	Flame + Flame = Blaze	Raises allies' resistance to Ice; used to upgrade weapons and armor
005	Jolt Shroom + Jolt Shroom = Lightning Shroom	Boosts Lightning offense but lowers Lightning defense; used to upgrade weapons
006	Spark Shroom + Spark Shroom = Jolt Shroom	Slightly boosts Lightning offense; used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
007	Stone + Stone + Chunk of Rubber = Boulder	Boosts physical defense; used to upgrade weapons and armor
008	Mother-in-Law's Secret + Paramour's Secret = Treasure Lowdown	Causes party to earn more experience when winning a battle
009	Celestial Flower Seed + Freezing Rain + Fresh Air = Celestial Flower Bud	Slightly raises allies' resistance to status ailments; used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
010	Mother Sunshine + Celestial Flower Bud + Fresh Air + Fresh Air = Celestial Flower	Slightly raises allies' resistance to status ailments; used to upgrade weapons and armor
011	Drinking Water + Blaze = Cloud	Slightly raises allies' resistance to Poison; used in story
012	Stale Water + Salt = Salty Water	Slightly boosts Holy offense; used in story
013	Blaze + Stone = Lava	Boosts Fire offense but lowers Fire defense; used to upgrade weapons and armor
014	Flame + Stone = Hot Rock	Slightly boosts Fire and physical offense; used to upgrade weapons and armor
015	Boulder + Salt = Rock Salt	Boosts Holy offense; used in story
016	Pristine Water + Blaze + Salt = Diadem Cloud	Slightly raises allies' resistance to Poison; used in story
017	Flame Ice + Primordial Cactus = Sparkling Snow	Boosts ice offense but lowers ice defense; used in story; used to upgrade weapons
018	Pristine Water + Egg + Blaze + Flame + Flame + Freezing Rain + Salt = Boiled Egg	Used in story
019	Hero's Pickax + Empty Book = Adventure Novel	May boost amount of experience gained from winning battles
020	Empty Book + Love Syrup = Naughty Novel	Used in story
021	Empty Book + Medic Kit = Dense Medical Tome	Substantially boosts allies' resistance to all status ailments
022	Blaze + Meat Fit for an Emperor + Holoholo Fruit + Hololloower Nectar = Chef-Prepared Meal	Boosts offense
023	Sparkling Snow + Sparkling Snow + Love Syrup = Shaved Ice of Love	Used in story
024	Blaze + Withered Branch = Mound of Soot	Slightly lowers allies' resistance to Blind; used to upgrade weapons
025	Salty Water + Mound of Soot = Soot Soup	Lowers allies' resistance to Blind; used to upgrade weapons and armor
026	Empty Book + Cottoncap Gauze = Basic Medical Primer	Boosts allies' resistance to status ailments; used in story
027	ThornFlower Nectar + Eau de Mouche = Stinging Antiseptic	Substantially boosts resistance to Poison; used to upgrade weapons and armor
028	Chronic Fatigue + Extreme Stress + Foul Air = Fluella Cooties	Increases susceptibility to status ailments; used to upgrade weapons and armor
029	Cottoncap Fruit + Cottoncap Fruit = Fluffy Pillow	Boosts the effect of Sleep on enemies; used in story
030	Pristine Water + Oleflour + Celestial Flour Seed + Holoholo Fruit + Love Syrup = Traditional KM Cookie	Slightly boosts offense; used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
031	Stale Water + Oleflour + Celestial Flower Seed + Holoholo Fruit + Hololloower Nectar = Original KM Cookie	Slightly boosts physical defense; used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
032	Blaze + Pow Meat = Well-Done Meat	Slightly boosts offense; used to upgrade weapons and armor
033	Gold Beetle Carapace + Gold Beetle Carapace + Gold Nugget = Gold Beetle Wallet	Earns your party interest on your gold holdings
034	Love Syrup + Terrible Song = Sweet Song	Used in story
035	Salt + Terrible Song = Heartbreaking Song	Used in story
036	Empty Book + Greythorne's Song = Greythorne Storybook	Used in story
037	Cottoncap Fruit + Half-Baked Greythorne + Cottoncap Fruit + Cottoncap Fruit = Floppy Greythorne	Used in story
038	Cottoncap Fruit + Floppy Greythorne + Cottoncap Fruit + Cottoncap Fruit + Cottoncap Fruit = Fluffy Greythorne	Used in story
039	Mother Sunshine + Holy Droplet + Pristine Water + Pristine Water + Pristine Water = Rainbow	Used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
040	Celestial Flower + Flowerpot + Freezing Rain + Freezing Rain + Freezing Rain = Potted Celestial Flower	Reduces allies' susceptibility to status ailments; used in story
041	Heartenbrace + Flowerpot + Pristine Water + Pristine Water = Potted Heartenbrace	Used in story
042	Nameless Flower + Flowerpot + Pristine Water = Potted Nameless Flower	Used in story
043	Celestial Flower + Celestial Fell-Branch + Dark Dagroot + Lightning Dagroot + Ice Dagroot + Fire Dagroot + Holy Dagroot + Rainbow = Celestial Tree	Used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
044	Mound of Soot + Mound of Soot + Mound of Soot + Mound of Soot + Mound of Soot = Pretty Stone	Boosts allies' resistance to Blind; used to upgrade weapons and armor
045	Stinging Antiseptic + Cottoncap Gauze = Medic Kit	Lowers probability of a knockdown in battle; used in story
046	Real-Deal Mask + Toy Sword = Hero License	Used in story
047	Salty Water + Greythorne Storybook + Greythorne's Song + Greythorne's Song + Greythorne's Song + Greythorne's Song + Greythorne's Song + Greythorne's Song = Half-Baked Greythorne	Used in story
048	Mountain Apple + Mountain Apple + Holy Droplet = Mountain Apple Wine	Used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
049	Blaze + Freezing Rain + Chronic Fatigue = Fresh Air	Used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor
050	Extreme Stress + Good Times = Fresh Air	Used in story; used to upgrade weapons and armor

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Suggestive Themes
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THE STUFF OF LEGENDS

PREPARE FOR TWILIGHT BY LOOKING BACK AT THE ZELDA SERIES' MOST LEGENDARY MOMENTS. (Part 2)

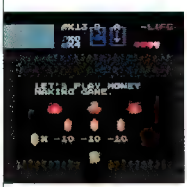
Each passing day brings us that much closer to the release of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess on Wii and GameCube, but the game's completion can't come soon enough. Until it does, we're continuing to whet our Zelda appetites by taking a trip down memory lane to discuss the highlights of Zelda games past. In this installment, we're looking back at our five favorite minigames, items and weapons, and dungeons—all essential aspects of what make the Zelda series great. We still have much to learn about Twilight Princess, but judging by the creativity that went into Link's previous adventures, his latest should be mind-blowing.

By Chris Hoffman

TOP 5 MINIGAMES

Saving Hyrule from Ganon is always an absorbing affair, but sometimes a hero needs to just kick back and enjoy life, which is where the Zelda series' numerous minigames and other nonessential diversions come in. Ranging from simple gambling opportunities to games of skill to world-spanning time-wasters, Zelda's minigames breathe extra depth into the adventure and give the games even more longevity.

Money-Making Game

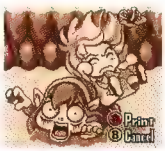


"Let's play money making game." With those words, a white-haired geezer introduced minigames to the Zelda universe. The actual game itself—choosing one of three Rupees in the hopes of earning a cash prize—wasn't especially compelling, but its place in Zelda history makes it one of the most significant.

Fishing

Link's first angling opportunity was a brief diversion in Link's Awakening, but in Ocarina of Time fishing blossomed into an involved sport that could devour hours on end (and it was even better when you used a Rumble Pak). We've already experienced the fishing in Twilight Princess, and it's shaping up to be fantastic, especially on Wii.

Scenic Photo Spots



In addition to a more vibrant palette, the Game Boy Color version of Link's Awakening added the opportunity for players to find 12 special photo locations and then print the pictures via the Game Boy Printer. Several photos were available only under specific conditions, but the humorous portraits were worth the effort.

Private Oasis Puzzles

Out of all of the Zelda series' minigames, the sliding-tile puzzles in The Wind Waker's Private Oasis are arguably the most relaxing. The puzzles don't cost anything to play and you're rewarded for completing them—what better way to take a breather from high-seas adventuring than moving tiles to re-form a beautiful work of art?

Tingle Tower Games

Oh, that nutty Tingle. He doesn't just make maps and hoard Rupees—he also hosts an assortment of eight multiplayer minigames in Four Swords Adventures. The Tingle Tower games offer competition at its finest in a variety of activities (such as fighting monsters and hitting pals with hammers), but if we could pick only one favorite, we'd go with the Bucking Bronco horseback race.

TOP 5 ITEMS & WEAPONS

The Zelda series wouldn't be half as fun or successful without the array of tools and weapons that Link can obtain throughout his quests. Each one brings new abilities and opportunities for discovery, and narrowing down the list to only five was no easy task. The Twilight Princess developers have already stated that many familiar Zelda tools and weapons will appear in the game, but with exciting new twists.

Hookshot

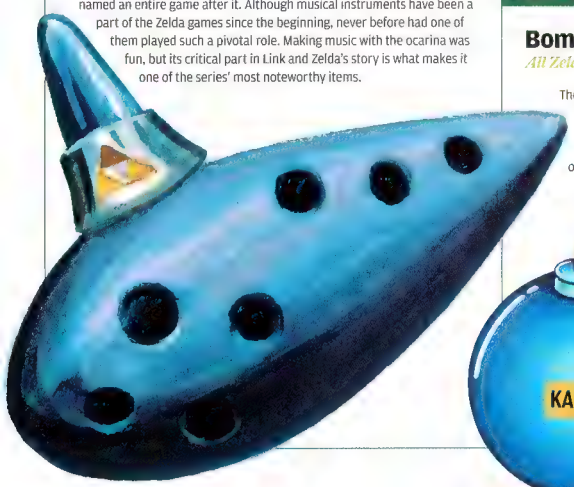
A Link to the Past, Link's Awakening, Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask, The Wind Waker

When we started discussing our favorite tools in the Zelda games, the one that instantly came to mind was the Hookshot. Ever since its introduction in A Link to the Past, the Hookshot has been one of the most fun and versatile items in the series. Its primary function of transporting Link short distances is just plain cool, and the added bonus of using it to defeat enemies and grab items makes it even better.

Ocarina of Time

Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask

Just how important is the Ocarina of Time? So important that the creators named an entire game after it. Although musical instruments have been a part of the Zelda games since the beginning, never before had one of them played such a pivotal role. Making music with the ocarina was fun, but its critical part in Link and Zelda's story is what makes it one of the series' most noteworthy items.



Mirror Shield

A Link to the Past, Ocarina of Time, Majora's Mask, The Wind Waker, The Minish Cap

When it was first introduced, the Mirror Shield was merely a stronger shield that helped Link deflect the powerful beam attacks of Ganon's minions. But as the series progressed, the shield lived up to its name by letting Link reflect beams of light with its gleaming surface. The resultant puzzles provided some truly involving gameplay.

Master Sword

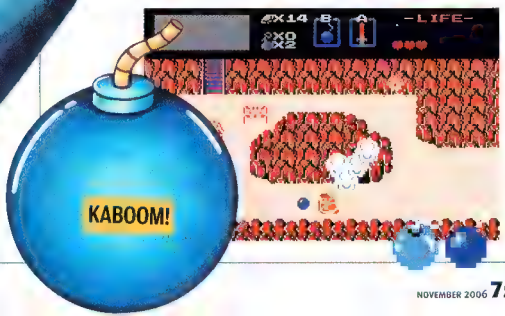
A Link to the Past, Ocarina of Time, Oracle of Ages, Oracle of Seasons, The Wind Waker

Also called "the sword of evil's bane," the Master Sword plays a key role in several Zelda adventures, in which it's an essential weapon for defeating the forces that plague the land. Acquiring the magical blade usually marks a significant turning point in Link's quests, and cutting down foes with your newly obtained power yields great gratification.

Bombs

All Zelda titles except The Adventure of Link

The bombs in the Zelda games perfectly represent the series' exploratory nature: you never know what you might find after you set one off and the smoke clears. Bombs have been part of nearly every Zelda game, and getting them means that a whole new world of secrets is about to open up. Also, things that explode are cool.

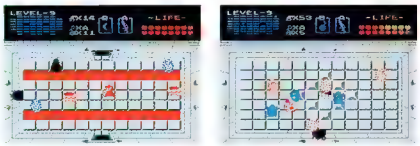


TOP 5 DUNGEONS

There are no bad dungeons in the Zelda series. Some are more memorable, some are more challenging, but all of them are masterfully designed and supremely satisfying. With their ingenious layouts, challenging puzzles, and hordes of vicious enemies within, the dungeons define Link's journeys—and what being a hero is all about. We can't wait to see where Link's quests will take him next.

Death Mountain

The first Zelda adventure culminated in the massive dungeon known as Death Mountain. As imposing as its name suggested (thanks in no small part to its skull-like shape and eerie music), Death Mountain tested Link's skills with nearly every challenge imaginable. There was no setting more suitable for Link's classic showdown with Ganon.

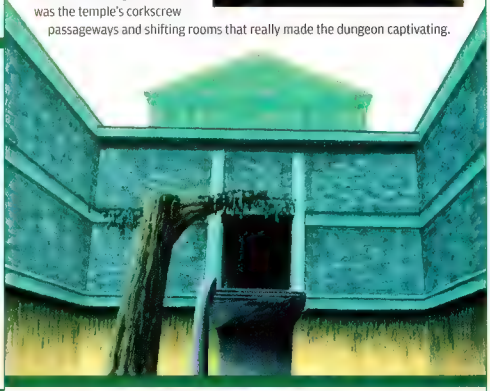


Dark Palace

Even though it was the first dungeon Link encountered in the Dark World, the Dark Palace was deceptively complex. Thanks to sealed passages, teleportation tiles, hard-to-reach switches, and a multitiered design, the dungeon's circuitous layout could keep players confounded for hours. The Dark Palace was truly a thinking hero's dungeon.

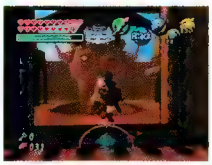
Forest Temple

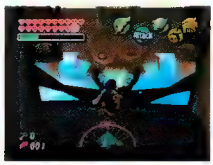
Hidden past the Sacred Forest Meadow beyond the Lost Woods, the Forest Temple was filled with an abundance of fun challenges, including falling ceilings, block-pushing puzzles, and flame-stealing Poes. But it was the temple's corkscrew passageways and shifting rooms that really made the dungeon captivating.



Stone Tower Temple

Upon entering the Stone Tower Temple, things don't make a lot of sense. Why the heck are there treasure chests on the ceiling? Halfway through, it becomes clear: you can turn the entire construct upside down. Not only is walking on the rafters cool, but the mechanic was incorporated into several clever puzzles.





Forsaken Fortress

The first time Link traveled to the Forsaken Fortress, he was but a fledging adventurer, and the fortress's stealth-oriented gameplay presented one of the tensest situations in any Zelda game. By the time he returned he had become a true hero, and bashing the bad guys he previously had to hide from was immensely empowering.

The usual suspects?

6'6''
6'0''
5'6''
5'0''
4'6''
4'0''
3'6''
3'0''

TOUCH DETECTIVE™

The Butler

The Girl

The Fungus

Well, that's good.
...Hey, wait a second!
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Wi-Fi Survivor:

Outwit...

Outshoot...

OutFOX

The brutal skies of Star Fox Command for Nintendo DS are filled with scores of would-be top guns and fat, juicy Slippys. Ready to begin your reign of terror? Report for Arwing flight school.

By Drew Williams

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And You Thought the Lylat System was Rough...

Star Fox Command's single-player game will hone your basic flying techniques, but none of the game's clearly defined battles will prepare you for the ferocity of human-vs-human combat. Stylus jockeys from all over the globe are salivating for the chance to turn your ship into space scrap during Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection dogfights. Quick thinking and sound, flexible tactics are the only paths to glory. We can't rewire your brain to make you think any faster, but we can toss out some tactical tidbits that will keep your furry tail airborne.

Power-ups, a unique feature of the multi-player experience, are critical to victory.

Suck-Up or Star Student?

Stars are the only measure of success in the multiplayer battles. A kill is meaningless to you if somebody else swoops in and collects the star that a defeated opponent left behind. Always follow up and perform barrel rolls to suck up your hard-won booty. Also keep an eye out for good star-poaching opportunities. Although you can win a round without firing a shot, we don't recommend that approach.

No Camping—Aggressively Enforced

A good way to ensure victory is to chase down targets quickly and unleash plenty of firepower. Don't waste time setting up elegant, one-shot kills or complicated maneuvers. Just get on someone's tail, take him down fast, then move on to the next target. Camping out to wait for approaching targets (a viable strategy in many multiplayer shooters) almost never works in Star Fox Command because time is short and bombs are plentiful.

Target-lock attacks can be devastating and are often useful, but be mindful of the time it takes to charge up a shot. A savvy opponent may not give you the opportunity to unload a powerful blast. Instead, use the time to chip away at his shields. Rapid-fire attacks are especially useful in head-on confrontations when an opponent is waiting for target lock.

Living Off the Land

You never know what kind of environment you'll get when you enter a battle, so study each arena to take advantage of its cover opportunities. For example, you can dip into river valleys, where steep canyon walls limit enemy approach vectors. Buildings are handy for shaking off pursuers: learn how to zigzag between structures. Foes who follow you may take damage if they lack your stylus skills.

Attack Accessories

A few items will litter the arena at the start of each round, and Rob will toss out a few more later to keep the battle interesting. You'll have a tough time winning if you don't use one or more of them in a round.

Bombs

Unlike the bombs in the single-player game, multiplayer bombs won't magically spare your ship if you're caught in the explosion. Stay clear of the blast zone.

Plasma Shot

Your style of play will determine if you should pick up the Plasma Shot. If you depend heavily on target lock, then avoid this powerful, manually targeted weapon.

Stealth

If you were a superhero, would you want to fly or be invisible? Why not both!? Stealth makes you disappear from your opponents' displays.

Supply Ring

This one is a no-brainer: supply rings restore your shield strength. Grab one whenever possible to stay in the fight and to keep your enemies weak.

Twin Lasers

Twin Lasers allow for multiple targeting, a useful feature when you face more than one enemy at a time. Keep your distance, then fire and forget!

Prize Flight

Watch your radar for items that pop up during a battle. Gobble up anything that appears near you, even if it doesn't provide you with an immediate benefit. Any item you acquire is one that you deny an opponent. (Be wary of opponents using the item-bombing technique described on the next page).

Poison the Well

Bombs are, without question, the most devastating weapons in the multiplayer game. They should be enough to finish off enemies who have anything short of full-strength shields. The trick is knowing where your cagey opponents will be when a bomb actually goes off. Bombing near power-ups is a great strategic option. Wait for opponents to race to a Supply Ring, for instance, then release your bomb. If you time the blast correctly, you can pick up some stars *and* the Supply Ring when you mop up.

A Legend on Your Own Card

When you enter the fray on the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, you won't know if you're dipping your toe in a pond full of Slippys or getting thrown to the Star Wolves. Each player is ranked from Z (crappy) to A (great), but that rank is stored only on the player's game card and is unknown to online opponents. Your ranking is determined by your total number of wins and stars, adjusted by your total number of matches. A loss only brings up your total of number matches, but dropping out of a match before it's over will subtract from your number of wins. Try to finish what you've started.

Shake that Tail

In the course of any given battle, you'll inevitably find yourself in an opponent's sights. Even when they light up your ship with a target lock, you have options that can save your skin—and possibly turn the tables. Your comfort level with the touch screen's various maneuver options will determine your success. Keep practicing the following moves, and those Wi-Fi bullies will never victimize you again.

LOOP AND LOCK

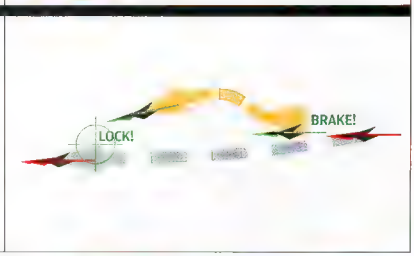
The loop-the-loop is very easy to execute . . . and very easy to screw up if you get disoriented as you regain control of your ship. Simply tap the loop icon to initiate the complete move automatically, then be ready to engage your pursuer immediately as you pull out of the loop. You'll have only a fraction of a second to get off a shot.

BURN AND TURN

A 180° flip-turn is another effective, canned move, but your success with it depends on your proximity to your attacker. Tap the top of the screen to boost thereby putting some distance between you and your attacker *before* you begin the turn. That way, you'll have time to react when you attempt a head-on engagement.

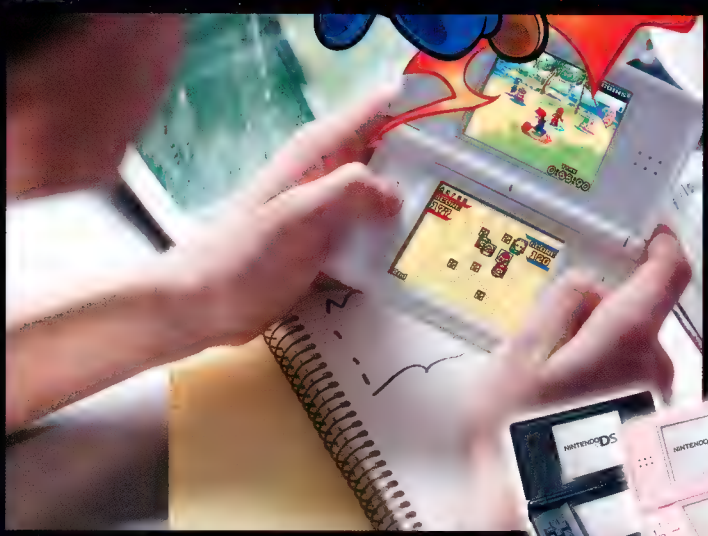
BRAKE TO OVERTAKE

Competent use of the brake is what separates Star Fox aces from rookies. By braking at the right moment, you can use your opponent's aggression against him. Let him pass beneath you, then pop him with a few blasts before he can slow down.



If You Want to Win, Follow the Losers

If you get into a head-on jousting match with an enemy, you'll both suffer. Better that only your opponent suffers! Try to stay behind your targets and wear down their shields with potshots and charged blasts. You'll stay nice and healthy, and you'll have more opportunities to collect stars.



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DUCKTALES

Before Street Fighter and Resident Evil, Capcom was busy turning a miserly duck into an unlikely platforming hero.

PLATFORM: NES
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 1989
COVERED IN ISSUES: 7 & 8
$ NEEDED FOR SECRET ENDING: 10 MILLION

If you grew up in the late '80s or early '90s, chances are you watched DuckTales at some point. Disney's pioneering animated series starring Scrooge McDuck and his mischievous grandnephews—Huey, Dewey, and Louie— was so popular that it completely changed the way studios looked at TV animation. To capitalize on that success, Capcom released an NES game based on the series at the height of its prominence. But unlike most licensed schlock of that era (I'm looking at you, Total Recall), the DuckTales game was actually worthy of its source material.

As with many a successful NES title, DuckTales was essentially built on a single compelling gameplay mechanic. In mid-jump, you could press Down and B to perform a pogo-jump using Scrooge's cane. The maneuver would let you bounce higher, squash enemies, and open treasure chests. That may sound like a very simplistic basis for an entire adventure—and it is—but the game works because the development team did such a great job of designing levels to take full advantage of the mechanic. It's an approach that many talented developers continue to follow to this day (albeit in a somewhat more sophisticated manner).

Weighing in at a mere five levels, DuckTales was exceedingly short; an experienced player could probably breeze through the entire thing in about an hour. But like another 8-bit Capcom classic, Mega Man, it seemed eminently replayable thanks to tight controls, fantastic music (Capcom knew how to rock that NES sound chip), and a much greater level of freedom than its contemporaries offered. As a matter of fact, DuckTales took that nonlinearity a step further by not only allowing you to select any of its world-spanning stages from the get-go, but also offering multiple paths through each one—something that was pretty unusual at the time. Thorough players could discover a number of secrets and hidden areas, as well.

Sadly, it's never been terribly common for a game based on a "kids" license to turn out so well. Too many publishers take a cynical approach to their younger audience and put very little effort into the titles intended for them. But as Scrooge McDuck and his NES classic prove, you can do things the right way and still make a lot of money.

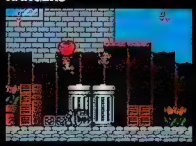
—STEVE T.

Have a favorite classic game you'd like to see revisited?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback.
pulse@nintendopower.com

OF DUCKS AND 'MUNKS

DuckTales wasn't Capcom's only successful 8-bit foray into the wide world of Disney. Here are three more fondly remembered titles from the house of Mickey.

CHIP 'N DALE RESCUE RANGERS



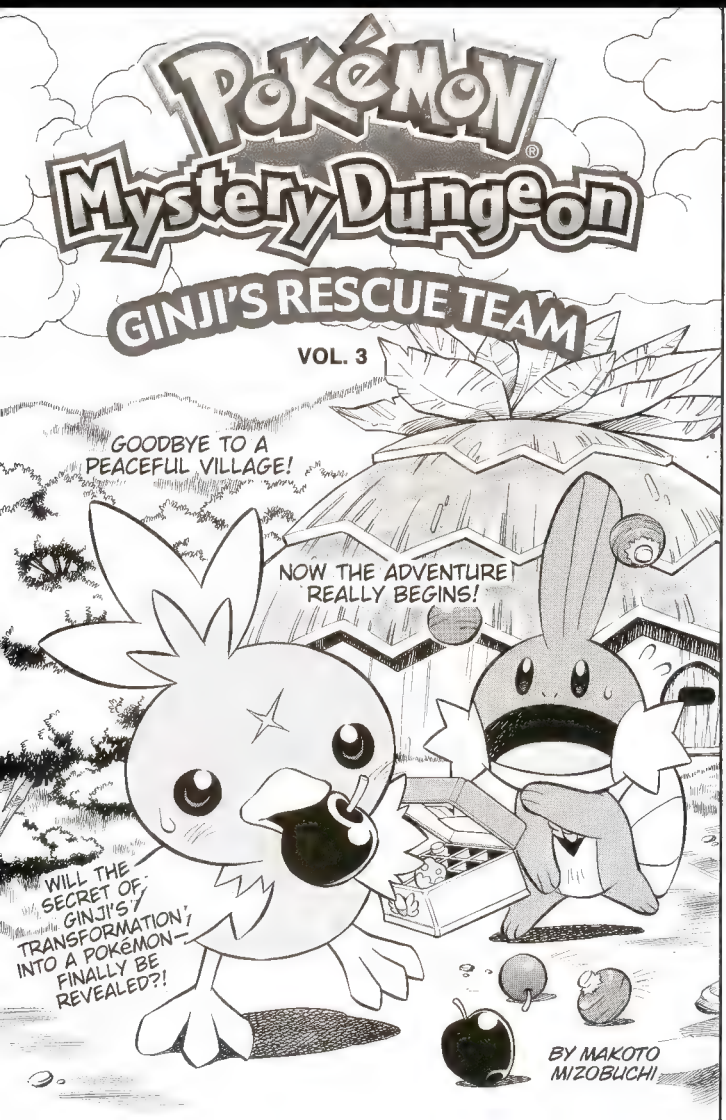
The main gameplay gimmick in Rescue Rangers was the ability to pick up objects (crates, apples, etc.) and chuck them at your foes. But the real allure of the game was its two-player co-op mode.

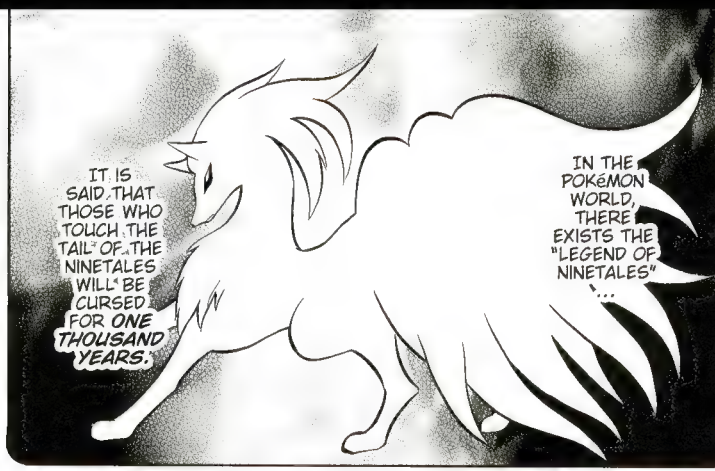
DARKWING DUCK

Darkwing Duck combined Mega Man-style action-platforming with the ability to grab onto and hang from various precipices a la Bionic Commando.

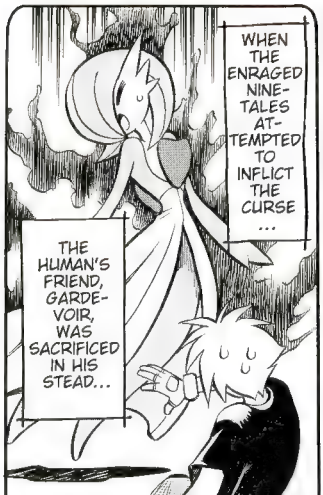
DUCKTALES 2

The sequel to DuckTales followed largely the same formula as the original, but introduced a number of new abilities for Scrooge. Released in 1993, it was one of the last significant titles to come out for the NES.


Pokémon
Mystery Dungeon
GINJI'S RESCUE TEAM
VOL. 3
GOODBYE TO A PEACEFUL VILLAGE!
NOW THE ADVENTURE REALLY BEGINS!
WILL THE SECRET OF GINJI'S TRANSFORMATION INTO A POKÉMON— FINALLY BE REVEALED?!
BY MAKOTO MIZOBUCHI


IN THE POKéMON WORLD, THERE EXISTS THE "LEGEND OF NINETALES"...
IT IS SAID THAT THOSE WHO TOUCH THE TAIL OF THE NINETALES WILL BE CURSED FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS.

NEVERTHELESS...!!!

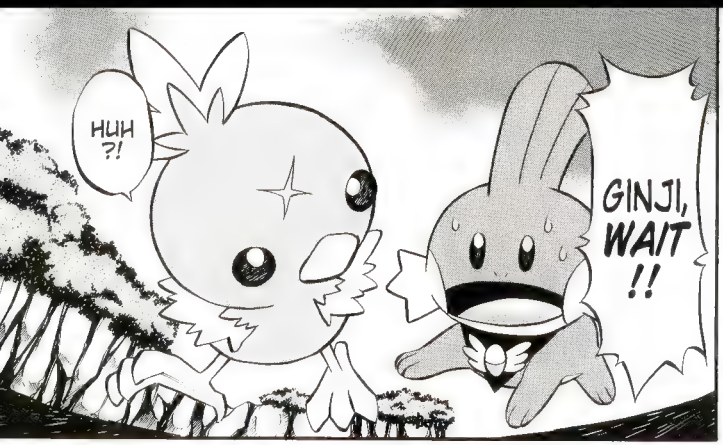


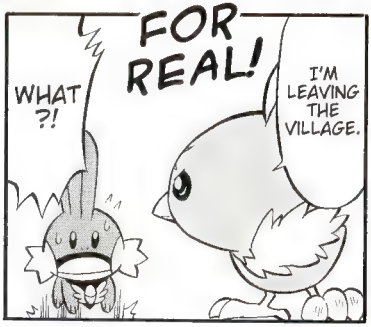
UPON BEING ASKED THIS QUESTION, THE HUMAN...
FOOLISH HUMAN. DO YOU WANT TO SAVE YOUR FRIEND, GARDEVOIR?
!
GINZLE
...ABANDONED GARDEVOIR, WHO HAD RECEIVED THE CURSE IN HIS PLACE.
THE DISAP-PROVING NINETALES THEN MADE A PROPHECY ...
AFTER ONE THOUSAND YEARS, THE REINCARNA-TION OF THAT FICKLE HUMAN WOULD BE REBORN AS A POKéMON AND "DESTROY THE WORLD" ...
THAT HUMAN IS GINJI, TRANS-FORMED INTO A TORCHIC !!
GINJI

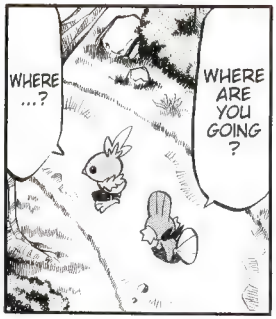
WHAT?! HE FELL ASLEEP !!
ZZZ
WHO BELIEVES ALL THAT DORKY STUFF ABOUT CURSES ANYWAY?
VWIP
YAWN
HUH?! IS IT OVER? THAT STORY WAS SO-O-O LONG.
THEY'RE TOTALLY BUYING IT!!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBL

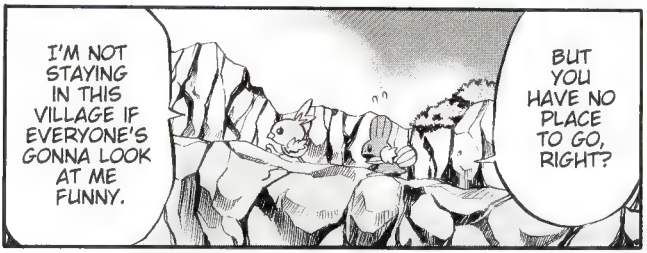
WE WERE ALL PLAYING TOGETHER, AND...
SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED WHEN I WAS HUMAN TOO...
GASP!!
GINJI
FRIEND B
FRIEND A
FRIEND C
DO YOU SMELL SOME-THING FUNNY?
FRIEND A
SNIFF
OKAY, MY TURN NEXT.
FRIEND A
GINJI
N-NO ...
YEAH.
IT'S COMING FROM OVER THERE.
WHAT ?!
GINJI
WHO CUT IT?
YEAH!
C
B
A
GINJI

!!
GINJI, WHAT'S WRONG?
AH.
IT'S NOT ME!! I DIDN'T DO IT!!
HEY, GINJI!
ZASH
TURN
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
GINJI! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
WAIT UP!
WAIT A SEC!


HUH ?!
GINJI, WAIT !!

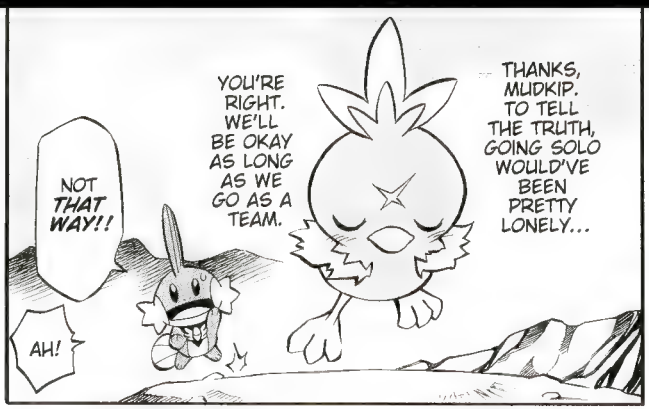

WHAT ?!
FOR REAL!
I'M LEAVING THE VILLAGE.

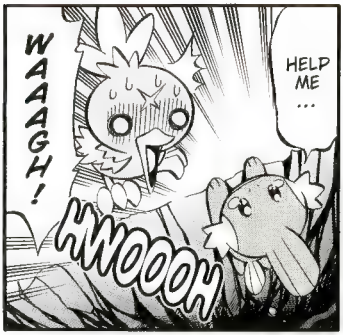

WHERE ...?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING ?

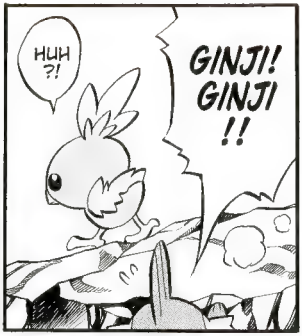

I'M NOT STAYING IN THIS VILLAGE IF EVERYONE'S GONNA LOOK AT ME FUNNY.
BUT YOU HAVE NO PLACE TO GO, RIGHT?

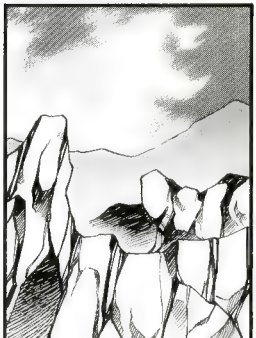
SO IF I GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT, I MIGHT FIND A WAY TO TURN BACK INTO A HUMAN!!
BESIDES... THAT LEGEND OF NINETALES MIGHT BE THE REASON WHY I TURNED INTO A POKéMON.
MEET N-NINE-TALES ?!
HUH ?!
SO LET'S GO MEET THIS NINETALES !!
Stomp
Stomp
HEY, WHY ARE YOU STILL FOLLOW-ING ME?
SHUT UP!
...AND LIVES REALLY, REALLY FAR AWAY...
I'VE HEARD NINETALES IS A REALLY SCARY POKéMON ...
W-WHY ?
FLUSTER
FLUSTER

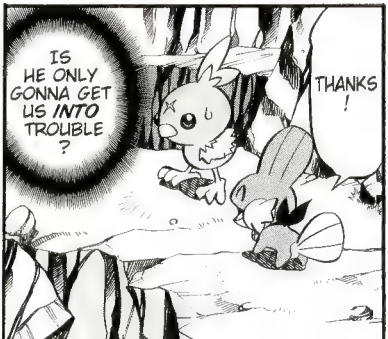
I BELIEVE IN YOU!
...YOU AREN'T THE KIND OF HUMAN WHO WOULD BETRAY A POKéMON!
AND ...
WELL, AREN'T WE A TEAM?
MUDKIP ...
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO GO WITH YOU AND HELP YOU...
BLUSH
ARE YOU S-STUPID OR SOMETHING?! I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU!!
OKAY ...


THANKS, MUDKIP. TO TELL THE TRUTH, GOING SOLO WOULD'VE BEEN PRETTY LONELY...
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'LL BE OKAY AS LONG AS WE GO AS A TEAM.
NOT THAT WAY!!
AH!


WAAAGH!
HELP ME ...
HWOOOH


HUH ?!
GINJI! GINJI !!

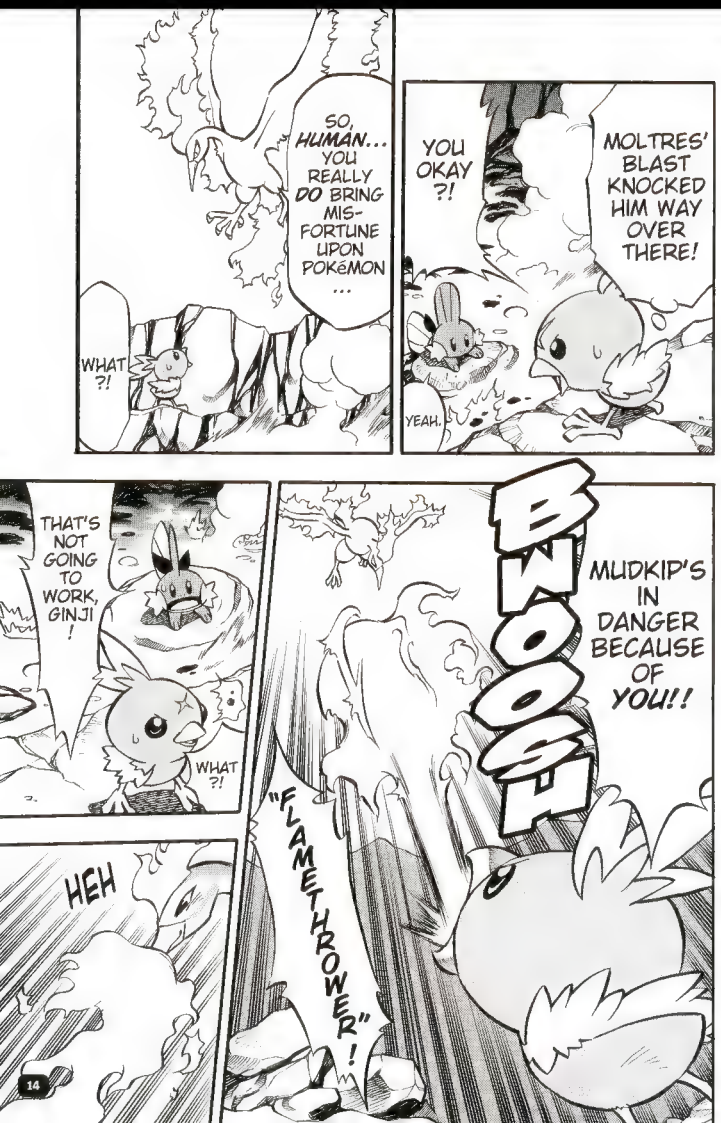


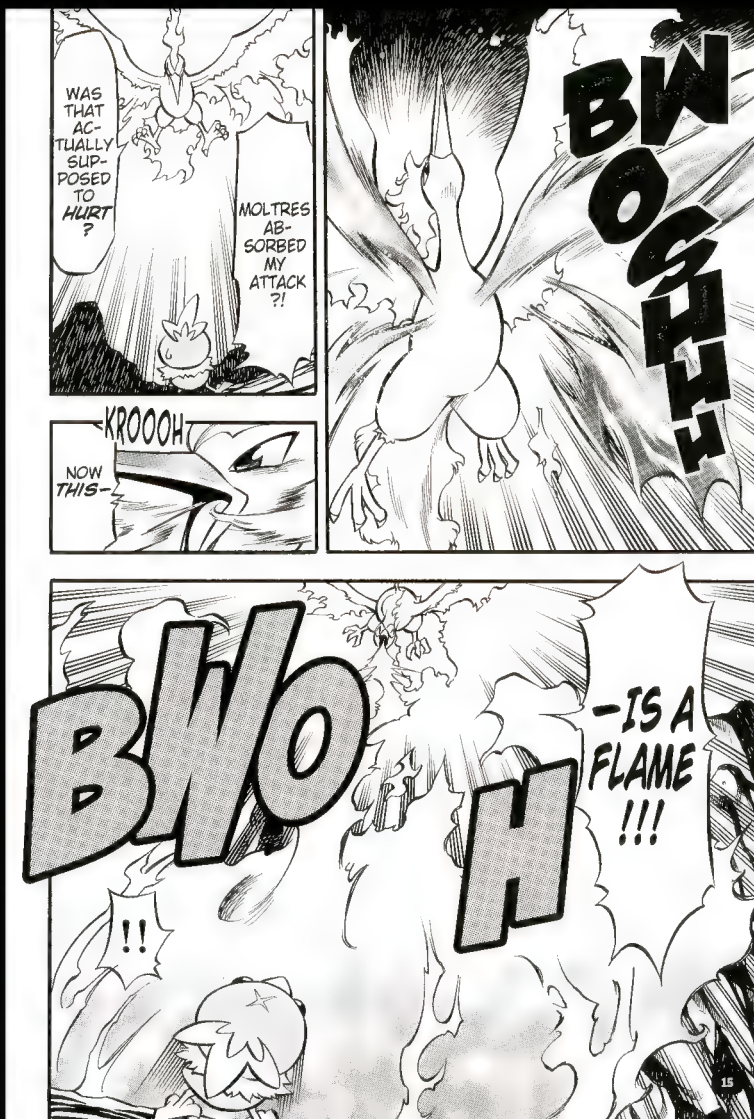

IS HE ONLY GONNA GET US INTO TROUBLE ?
THANKS !

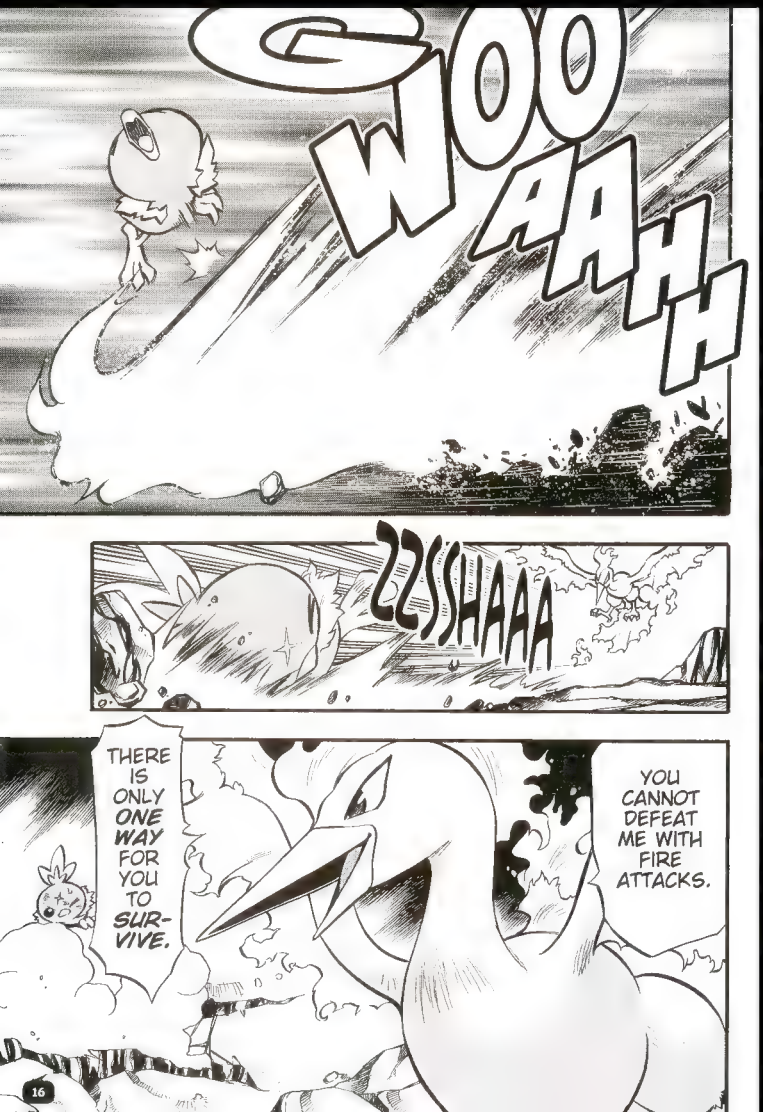
IT SURE IS HOT!
I CAN'T TAKE THE HEAT.
HUH?
WHOA! NO WONDER IT'S SO HOT! THERE'S A RIVER OF LAVA HERE!
BUBBLE
BUBBLE
IT WOULD BE BAD NEWS IF I FELL IN...
!!

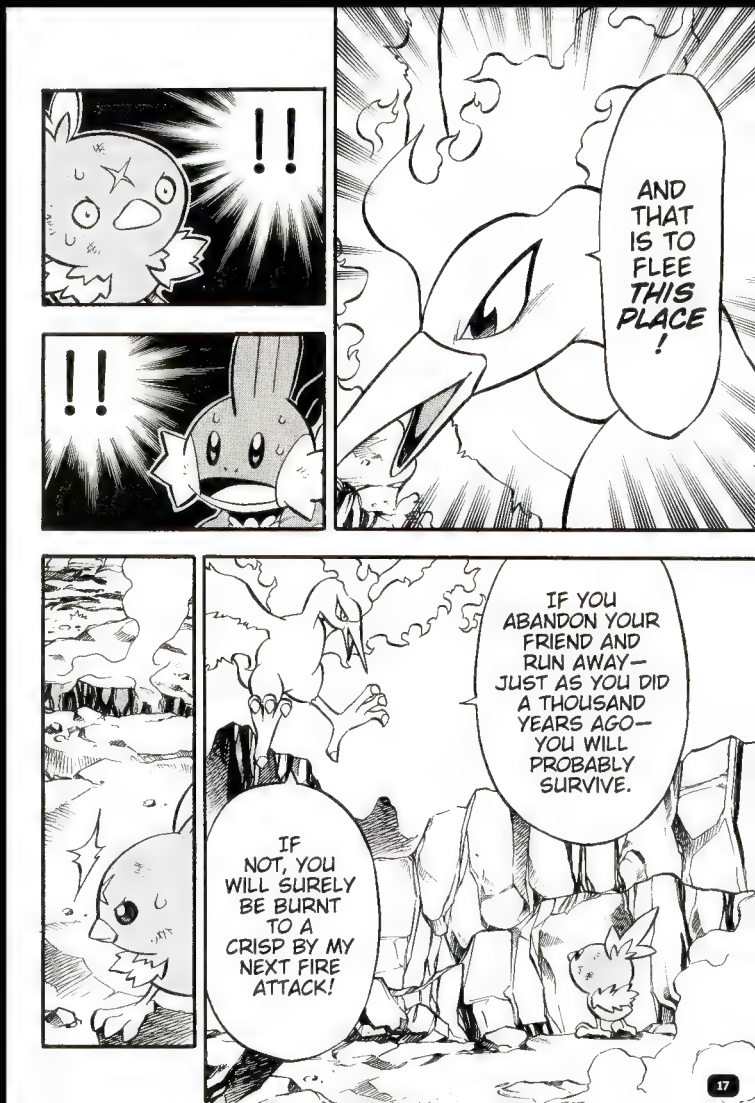
FWAH
MOLTRES?!
YOU ARE GINJI, THE HUMAN CURSED BY NINETALES.
WAAGH!
HOW DOES HE KNOW ABOUT ME?!

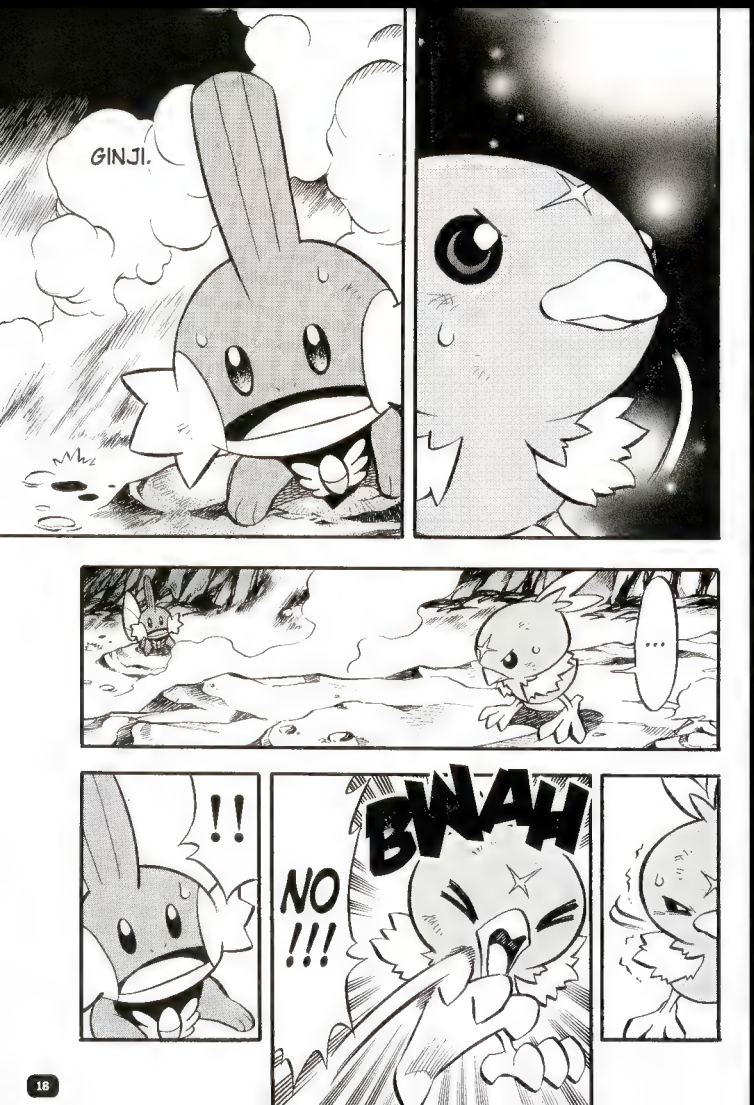
WITH GINJI OUT OF THE WAY, MY PLANS'LL BE ONE STEP CLOSER TO..
HEH HEH HEH... I FOOLED MOLTRES COMPLETELY.
OUR WORLD WILL BE DESTROYED UNLESS YOU DEFEAT HIM!
THE TORCHIC THAT'S GOING TO PASS BY HERE SOON IS ACTUALLY A HUMAN BEING CURSED BY NINETALES.
!!
G-GINJI ...
MUDKIP !!!

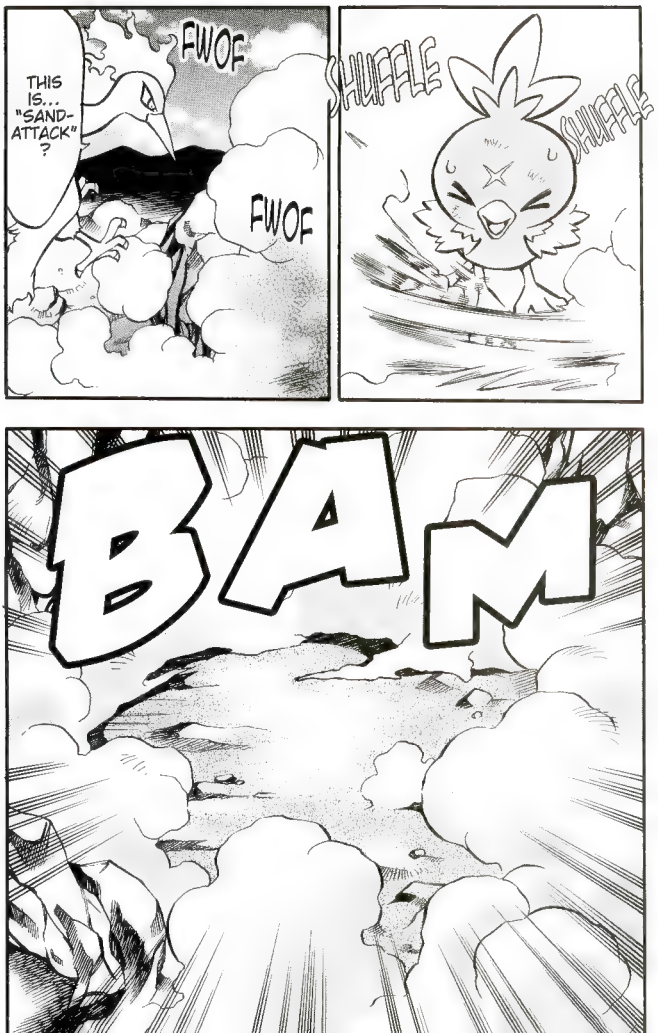

SO, HUMAN... YOU REALLY DO BRING MISFORTUNE UPON POKéMON ...
WHAT?!
YOU OKAY?!
MOLTRES' BLAST KNOCKED HIM WAY OVER THERE!
YEAH.
THAT'S NOT GOING TO WORK, GINJI!
WHAT?!
HEH
"FLAMETHROWER"!
WHOOSH
MUDKIP'S IN DANGER BECAUSE OF YOU!!


WAS THAT ACTUALLY SUPPOSED TO HURT?
MOLTRES ABSORBED MY ATTACK?!
BWOSHHH
KROOOH
NOW THIS-
BWO
H
-IS A FLAME !!!
!!

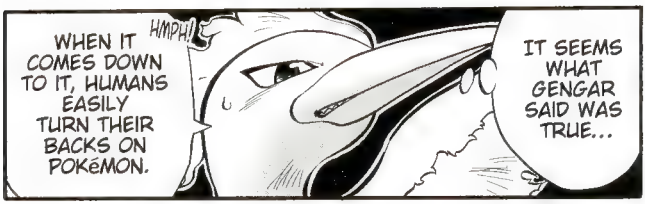

WOOAAHH
ZZSSHAAA
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY FOR YOU TO SURVIVE.
YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME WITH FIRE ATTACKS.

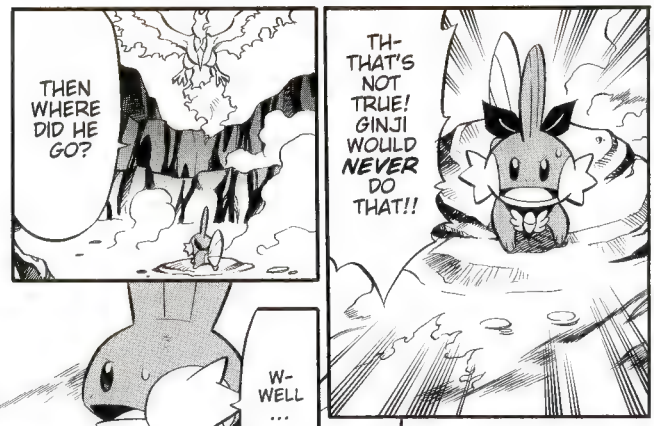

!!
!!
AND THAT IS TO FLEE THIS PLACE!
IF YOU ABANDON YOUR FRIEND AND RUN AWAY— JUST AS YOU DID A THOUSAND YEARS AGO— YOU WILL PROBABLY SURVIVE.
IF NOT, YOU WILL SURELY BE BURNT TO A CRISP BY MY NEXT FIRE ATTACK!


GINJI.
...
!!
NO !!!
BWAH


THIS IS... "SAND-ATTACK"?
FWOF
FWOF
SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE
BAM

GINJI'S GONE?!
!


HMPH!
WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, HUMANS EASILY TURN THEIR BACKS ON POKéMON.
IT SEEMS WHAT GENGAR SAID WAS TRUE...

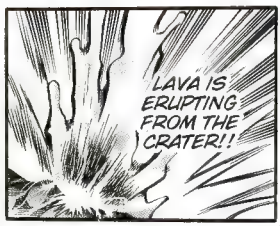

THEN WHERE DID HE GO?
TH-THAT'S NOT TRUE! GINJI WOULD NEVER DO THAT!!
W-WELL ...

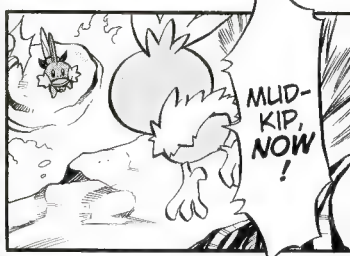
BWA
H
I'M RIGHT HERE!!
HMPH! ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE ME LAUGH WITH YOUR LITTLE SMOKE-SCREEN?
NO MATTER HOW CLOSE YOU GET, YOUR ATTACKS ARE USELESS AGAINST ME.
GINJI!!
IT'S TRUE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, GINJI?

!
BWOOH
GW
"FLAME THROWER"!
OH
HUH?!
NOPE. I HIT THE BULL'S-EYE.
WHAT?!
APPROACHING ME WITH A USELESS ATTACK AND MISSING FROM SUCH A CLOSE DISTANCE...
OO
O
HM
YOU ARE A FOOL!
RUMBLE RUMBLE
IS THAT THE PLACE HE JUST BLASTED?!
RUMBLE
THAT?!

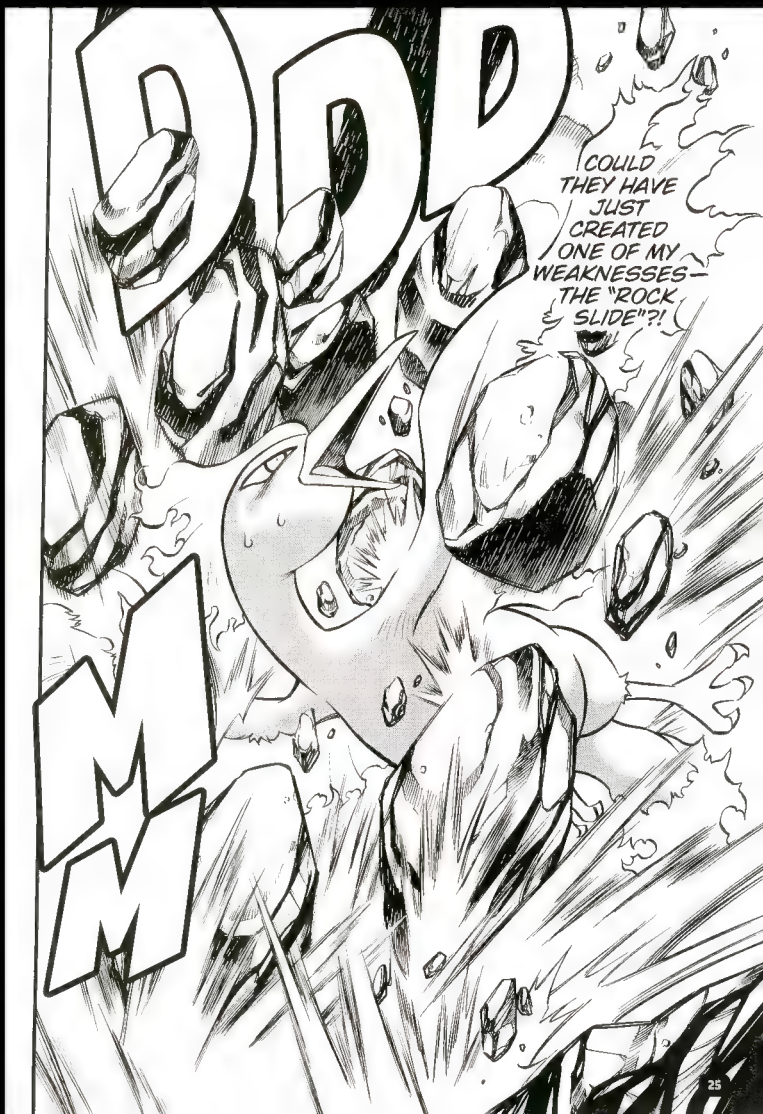
!
OOOH

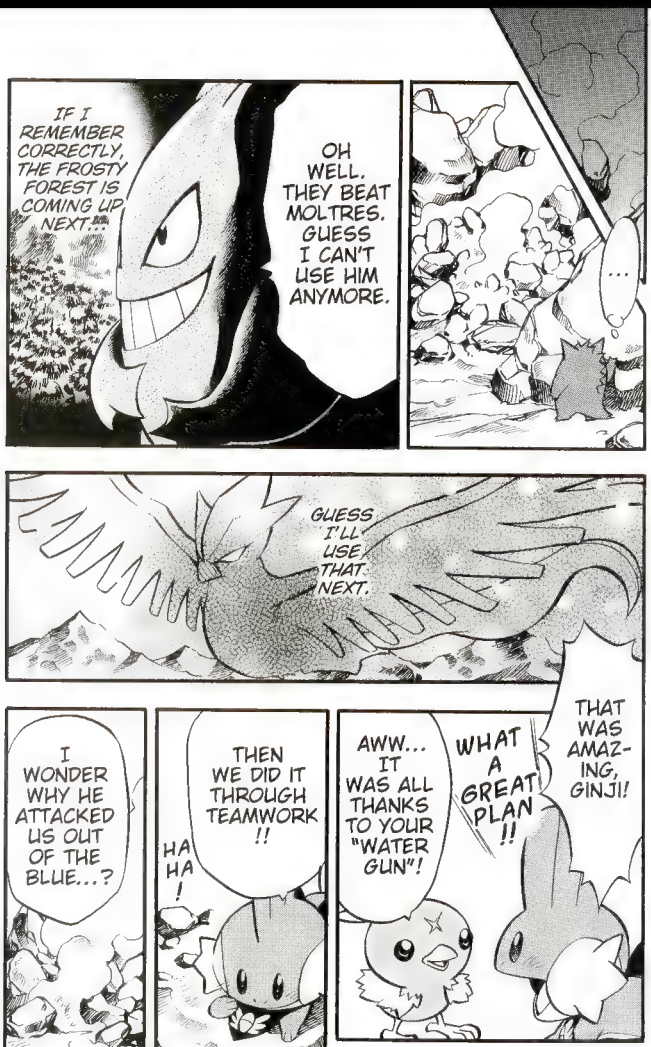
"WATER GUN"!
WOOSH!

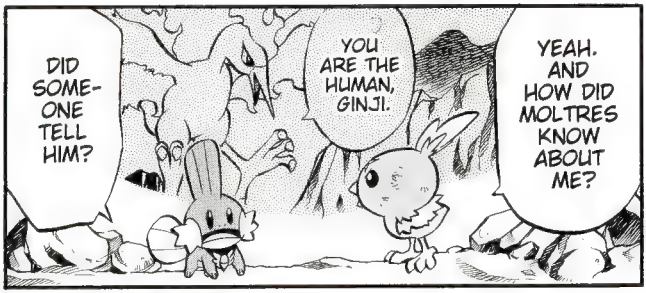

LAVA IS ERUPTING FROM THE CRATER!!

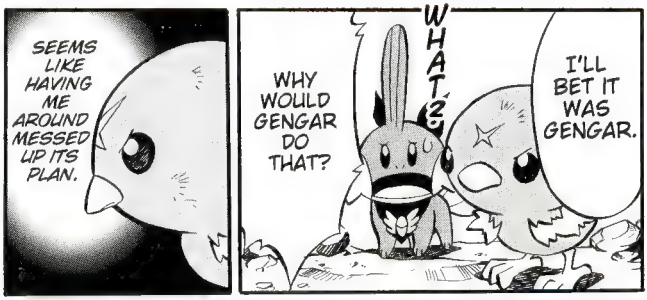

MUD-KIP, NOW!

PER-
FECT!
GA
K
WHAT?!
GTNK
THE ERUPTING LAVA COOLED INSTANTLY AND TURNED TO ROCK...!
C-COULD IT BE...
GTNK

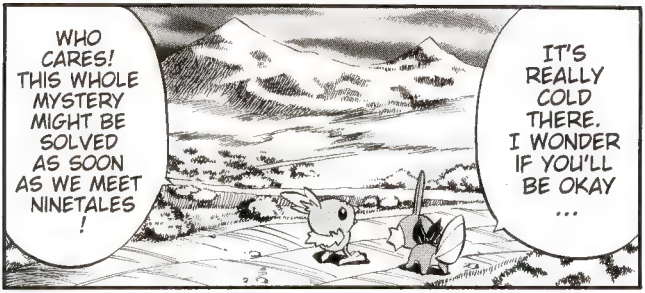

DDD
MMM
COULD THEY HAVE JUST CREATED ONE OF MY WEAKNESSES— THE "ROCK SLIDE"?!

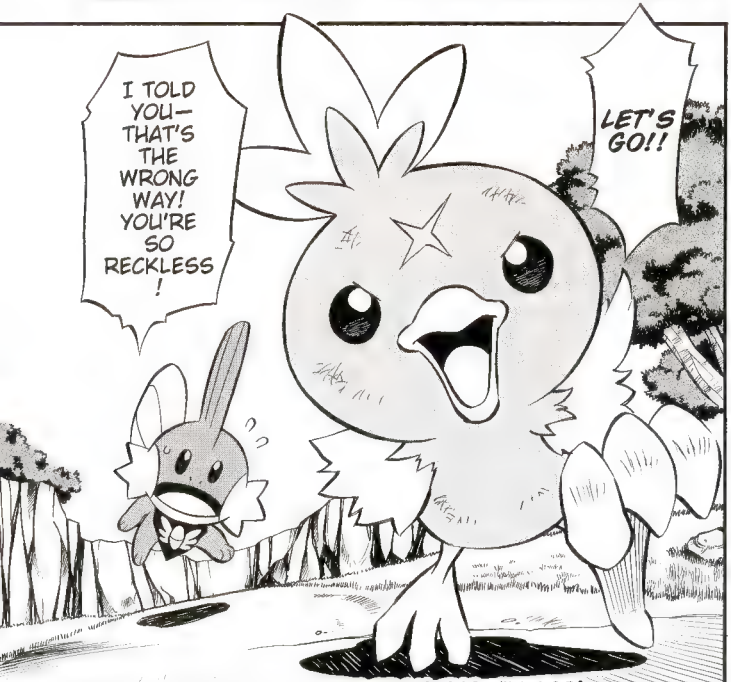

IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, THE FROSTY FOREST IS COMING UP NEXT...
OH WELL. THEY BEAT MOLTRES. GUESS I CAN'T USE HIM ANYMORE.
...
GUESS I'LL USE THAT NEXT.
I WONDER WHY HE ATTACKED US OUT OF THE BLUE...?
HA HA!
THEN WE DID IT THROUGH TEAMWORK!!
AWW... IT WAS ALL THANKS TO YOUR "WATER GUN"!
WHAT A GREAT PLAN!!
THAT WAS AMAZ-ING, GINJI!


DID SOME-ONE TELL HIM?
YOU ARE THE HUMAN, GINJI.
YEAH. AND HOW DID MOLTRES KNOW ABOUT ME?


SEEMS LIKE HAVING ME AROUND MESSED UP ITS PLAN.
WHY WOULD GENGAR DO THAT?
WHAT!?
I'LL BET IT WAS GENGAR.

TO MEET NINETALES, WE HAVE TO PASS THROUGH THE FROSTY FOREST FIRST.
WE'RE NOT THERE YET!!
HELLOOO!?
WHERE'S NINE-TALES?
WELL ...?





GINJI AND MUDKIP DEPART FROM THE VILLAGE!
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REVIEWS

In-depth reviews of the latest games

LEGO Star Wars II pieces together episodes IV, V, and VI. If you thought the Ewoks were adorable, wait until you see that cuddly Darth Vader.

Baten Kaitos Origins, Cooking Mama, Contact, and more.

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UNCOMMON ORIGIN

BATEN KAITOS ORIGINS

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: MONOLITH SOFT
ESRB: TEEN

GameCube isn't exactly known for its RPGs, though there have been some good ones—Baten Kaitos: Eternal Wings and the Lost Ocean is one of them. That game took flight when GCN owners were starving for something new in the RPG department. But rather than churning out a derivative title to fill the void in the console's library, Namco and Monolith Soft gave us an RPG that was entirely original, surprisingly enormous, and a whole lot of fun. Now, with Wii just around the corner and GameCube releases becoming scarcer across all genres, prepare to be surprised yet again. Baten Kaitos Origins improves on its predecessor's proven formula, and stands out as a unique RPG experience whether you played the first game or not.

Origins takes place in the same world as Eternal Wings, but 20 years earlier and with a new cast of characters. Your party is led by Sagi, a young man with the mysterious ability to communicate with a guardian spirit. The story kicks off quickly as Sagi is united with Guillo and Milly (Sagi's companions for the duration of the game). Origins also includes a fourth hero—you. Playing the role of Sagi's guardian spirit, you will often be addressed directly by characters in the game, and you'll make important decisions, which can affect the game's outcome. And as the complex plot moves along and the characters' pasts and futures come to light, so will yours. It may sound like a cheesy plot gimmick, but it's done really well and serves as an anchor for the wild story, and as a defining feature of the game as a whole.

As you and your three companions progress through the enormous saga (which will likely exceed 100 hours of gameplay if you partake in enough side quests), you'll encounter a number of familiar faces and places. Younger versions of key characters from Eternal Wings make appearances, and much of the engaging scenery returns as well. Visually, Origins is nothing short of stunning, with top-notch art direction and some of the best graphics on the GCN. Fans of the first game might be put off by the recycled content (mainly, the reuse of the prerendered backgrounds from the first game), but Origins has plenty of new content to make up for it. Throughout the game, your party will flip-flop between the main world (from the first game) and an entirely new world, leaving you to make sense of the intertwining storylines. It's really quite something.

Though Origins has its own identity, it draws much inspiration from Eternal Wings, especially in regard to game mechanics. Fans of the original will welcome back the unique Magnus system, in which RPG mainstays ranging from battling to inventory are reimagined using decks of cards. Much of Origins revolves around collecting Magnus and using it to advance the story or to attack. Though the fundamentals of Magnus haven't changed, the way you use them is quite different. When entering a battle, for instance, you can now take only one deck rather than a separate deck for each party member. Having your entire crew share a deck simplifies things (for the better), and puts the focus on battling rather than deck-building. (Don't worry, card fanatics—there's still plenty of deck building in Origins.) Additionally, the battle system itself has been completely overhauled to accommodate the new single-deck system. One major change is that your characters are healed completely after each battle. This feature works well for the most part, and is a nice change of pace from RPGs in which you're forced to heal between battles. The downside is that enemies do more damage, and you'll have to do a lot of healing within each battle to make up for it. As the game's difficulty increases and the bosses get stronger, the "luck of the draw" aspect of battle becomes unforgiving.

Probably the game's biggest addition to the card-collecting scheme is the ability to mix Magnus. This feature adds a new level of complexity, and it can be a lot of fun. But it can be a chore, as well. As you search every nook and cranny for Magnus and for mix recipes, you're not given nearly enough space in your inventory to hold your found Magnus, so often you must discard something before you know what it is. This flaw is most apparent when you're trudging through tedious fetch quests. You'll often need an ingredient that you threw away long ago, or one that is available only halfway across the world. And to add to the confusion, the quests often don't make a whole lot of sense. Still, Origins is an incredibly ambitious game offering challenging battles and a story that rivals some of the best RPGs out there. Whether you're looking for the next great RPG or a good reason to dust off your GameCube, Origins is a worthy title that will keep you busy for a long time to come.
—ANDY M.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE GAME LOCATION THEME?

We've conquered ice worlds and lava worlds, rocketed off to the future and explored the ancient past. Our reviewers chime in on their favorite destinations.

I'm not sure I have a favorite, but my least favorite is gritty, urban, contemporary environments. They've been done to death, lack imagination, and always come off as clichéd.

I'm a huge fan of the Old West, with its beautiful scenery, fascinating characters, and general lawlessness. Gun was great, but it wasn't enough—this feels like a huge, untapped motif for future games.

Whether it's the spinning background in Super Castlevania IV, the black and white level in Wind Waker, or the other-worldly sequences in Baten Kaitos Origins, I'm most easily entertained by mind-bending game environments.

I'm partial to near-future or present-day sci-fi, like that of the Resident Evil games and Second Sight. If the locations seem real and familiar, it's much more surprising when something extraordinary happens.

I'm most compelled by worlds that come from the imaginations of their developers. Games like Beyond Good & Evil or even Super Mario Bros. are great because they let you explore these wonderful places you've never seen before.

MECHASSAULT: PHANTOM WAR

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: MAJESCO
DEVELOPER: BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT
ESRB: TEEN

If you played PC games in the '90s, chances are you gave MechWarrior 2 a spin. The first-person-perspective giant-robot battler was everywhere. And, though it was popular, the sim and its sequels carried annoying remnants of MechWarrior's paper-game days, such as a need to let weapons cool after use. Enter MechAssault: Phantom War, MechWarrior's third-person-perspective, pure-action cousin, in which cooling down is rarely required. Mech-versus-mech battle is the game's bread and butter, but you also take on missions in tanks and human-scale Battle Armor, sometimes hacking into unoccupied mechs or security systems by way of a touch-controlled minigame that has you dragging and dropping futuristic symbols into place. The variety adds to the fun and makes playing much more of a video game experience than that of the MechWarrior PC titles.

Mech control is, unfortunately, completely button-oriented, wasting the opportunity for more-precise aiming with a stylus. Also, there's no obvious indication if you are making a dent while battling the heavily armored enemy mechs (that is, until they explode). Nonetheless, the action is well-balanced and production values (especially an unprecedented amount of voiceover) are top-notch. Five multiplayer modes for up to four players round out an entertaining game.
—GEORGE S.

OFF THE RIM

MARIO HOOPS 3-ON-3

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
ESRB: EVERYONE

The basketball court may be too small to hold the antics of Mario and his Mushroom Kingdom cronies. Though the kookiness is contained in the beginning stages of the Mario Hoops 3-on-3 tourney, the action gets wildly out of control by the time you are battling for the third and (unlockable) fourth cups. Even with only three athletes to a side, there is a lot to keep track of in the advanced stages—fireballs, ball-stealing Boos, stray Bob-ombs—so much so that the game becomes too chaotic for its own good. The AI-controlled opponents contribute to the anarchy by stealing the ball at a furious pace, tossing shells and poisonous mushrooms, and scoring at will. Of course, you want the matches to be challenging, but such high-intensity threatens to expose a weakness in the control scheme. Moving your characters (with the Control Pad if you're right-handed or the A, B, X, and Y Buttons if you're left-handed) and performing almost every other function with taps and slashes of the stylus is intuitive, and the occasional missed pass or slow transition from one end of the court to the other is to be expected from a game that requires so much coordination. But, the NPC opponents should be subject to the same circumstances. If the opposition is running circles around your guys, your reaction is likely a feeling of defeat rather than a drive to succeed. It's not all frustration, though: the scoring system, which rewards you for the coins that you are able to collect and hold onto as you make your way to the basket, is exciting, and the charge shots, tap-controlled dribbling, and monstrous blocks are satisfying when they work. Also, the appearance of FINAL FANTASY characters as unlockable ballers is an unexpected bonus. Another cool feature has you automatically jumping into a game with a second Mario Hoops 3-on-3 player if both games are sending out feelers for opponents. With enough practice against human opponents under your belt, you may eventually find play against the AI opponents to be more manageable.
—GEORGE S.

MYSTERY SOLVED

POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON: BLUE RESCUE TEAM AND RED RESCUE TEAM

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS, GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: GAME FREAK, CHUNSOFT
ESRB: EVERYONE

Pokémaniacs tend to disagree on the future of Pokémon games—has the string of similar titles run its course, or does the "if it ain't broke don't fix it" philosophy prevail? Both are legitimate arguments for a series that recently reached its tenth birthday, and has built a legion of unwavering fans. Happily, Pokémon's latest does a solid job of reaching out to the two factions—Pokémon Mystery Dungeon introduces a new style of gameplay but manages to keep many of the elements that Pokémon fans know and love.

No one could argue that plot has been the Pokémon games' strong suit (uh-oh, Team Rocket is raising trouble again!), but Pokémon-collecting and tough, clever battles made the games a lot of fun. Mystery Dungeon runs into a bit of a dilemma: the big twist that you are now a Pokémon requires much more explanation than any element of previous games. Fortunately, the story holds up better than usual; good plot developments and twists help to create a well-rounded tale. Like in previous games, however, following the story requires certain logical leaps—not everything has changed, it seems.

The top-down, turn-based gameplay that Mystery Dungeon employs isn't anything new, but the inclusion of familiar items such as TMs and berries helps retain the Pokémon vibe, as do touches like weather effects. Mystery Dungeon also introduces many new items and gameplay elements that integrate well into the game design, but don't cause the game to lose focus or become bloated with difficult-to-use features. Although the system of IQ and tactics is a good one, the team control mechanics leave something to be desired, and more options (especially on the tactics side) would be welcome.

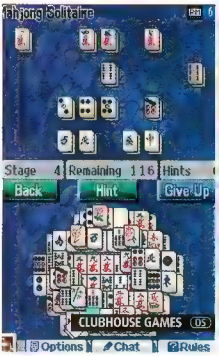
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon boasts several new battle aspects—which some might say were sorely needed to spark new interest in the series. Pokémon purists shouldn't worry, however—all of the traditional attacks are still available, and there's still a heavy emphasis on traditional battle aspects such as type matching and combos. Move linking is a particularly cool new feature—it's not a requirement for success, so players who don't want to mess with it don't have to, but those who do will probably really get into it. Move linking could and should carry over to future Pokémon games; hard-core Pokémon players will love getting their hands dirty with the technique's nuts and bolts. Another new element is the regular attacks that all Pokémon can perform—they provide a fallback for assailing your enemy, but it's easy to sidestep the most interesting facets of the traditional Pokémon battle system if you rely on the regular attacks too much. Battling isn't the only thing that has been overhauled—the process of catching Pokémon has been reworked, as well. The ability to eventually coerce every Pokémon you encounter to join you is a great feature.

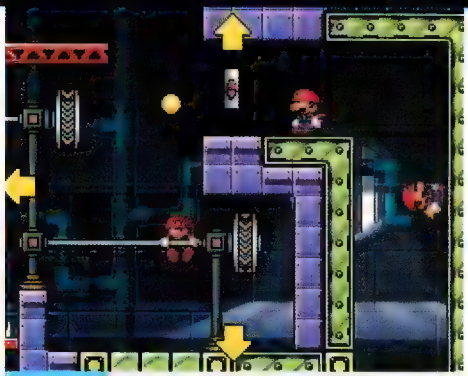
Even though you can visit scores of dungeons, the game suffers from repetitiveness. The dungeons have a sameness to them, caused largely by the random level design—auto-generated floors take away one of the most effective ways to identify dungeons: their layout. Returning to the same village after every sortie into the depths also contributes to the feeling of sameness. If Mystery Dungeon were only half as long as it is, not even the most die-hard Pokémon fan would complain too loudly.

But one thing that the die-hard Pokémon fans may miss is the ability to connect between games with their friends. Connectivity is a feature so deep-seated in the Pokémon franchise that it has become an expectation for every new game. Mystery Dungeon bucks that trend—its smattering of multiplayer features doesn't resonate in the same way as the elaborate head-to-head battles of earlier games. But Mystery Dungeon doesn't suffer much for the lackluster multiplayer choices, and shoehorning connectivity might have turned out badly.

Because almost-identical versions of Mystery Dungeon are coming to the DS and the GBA, certain features are hard to judge. The graphics look par for the course on the GBA, but the DS is capable of so much more. It's nice that the franchise hasn't abandoned the GBA, but the constraints of matching the graphical qualities of the DS version to those of the older platform are clearly evident. Nonetheless, the DS version smartly exploits its unique features, particularly its wireless networking and dual screens. The dual screen is particularly handy for offsetting your map to the upper screen, leaving the action uncluttered on the lower screen.

Despite a few shortcomings, Mystery Dungeon will satisfy the needs of Pokémon fans while they hold their breath for the release of Pokémon Diamond and Pearl. Mystery Dungeon is not perfect, but its robust and original aspects form a game more solid than many expected. —CHRIS S.





CLUBHOUSE GAMES

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: AGENDA
ESRB: EVERYONE

Clubhouse Games offers an unbelievable number and variety of games. From parlor games like checkers and bridge to more-active games like shake the bottle and billiards, Clubhouse Games delivers something that everyone will like. The inclusion of Wi-Fi capability seems like a no-brainer—most of the games are multiplayer by nature, and because there are few variations on each game it's easy to set up games that everyone will agree upon. The number of games that you can play wirelessly with only one game card is great—the individual games are pretty small, so it doesn't take long before you and your friends are up and running.

Unquestionably, the card games and the table games are the title's biggest successes. Recreational goodies like I Doubt It and Hearts also provide a wealth of fun, as do board games like Chinese checkers and backgammon. But Clubhouse Games runs into some hurdles in how some games are constructed and scored. For many of the diversions, instead of going with a conventional scoring system, Clubhouse Games sets a limited number of rounds or hands you will play, and determines the score at their abrupt conclusion. This system changes the essential nature of some of the games, such as contract bridge, rummy, and even bowling. The games that rely upon precise touch-screen agility also suffer quite a bit in the translation—winning at darts requires far more luck than skill, and Takeover is far more frustrating than fun. And while there are quite a few enjoyable activities to try out, it would have been nice to see a few more solitaire-type games for the solo player—the experience is definitely skewed toward the multiplayer gamer.

There are indeed plenty of things to do in Clubhouse Games, but it's not perfect. If you plan on playing with your friends, it's indispensable; if you'll be going at it alone, there's a fair amount to do but you may lose patience with the scoring and lack of single-player variety. —CHRIS S.

ONE PIECE: PIRATE'S CARNIVAL

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
DEVELOPER: H.A.N.D.
ESRB: EVERYONE

Having tackled the GBA side-scroller and the Smash Bros.-style fighter, Shonen Jump's anime pirate crew goes after the four-player party game with One Piece: Pirates' Carnival. The minigame roster consists of 32 events (compared to Mario Party 7's 86 minigames), the majority of which are battle-oriented. Sometimes the pirates are on stilts, sometimes they're on the deck of the *Merry Go*, but they're almost always punching each other. Nonbattle highlights include a variation on Concentration, and the Balloon Dive Chicken Race, which has characters plummeting to the ship's deck. The title's 13 Captain minigames pit one pirate against the others, but like the game's other activities, they rely on pummeling. The board-game structure that frames the minigames moves at a quick pace, and players are never left out of the action. It's a good choice for punchy party fans. —GEORGE S.

MARCH MADNESS

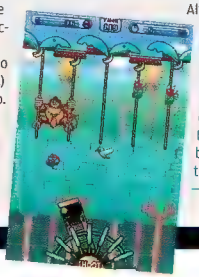
MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2: MARCH OF THE MINIS

RATING: 7.5

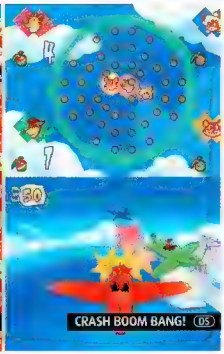
PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY
ESRB: EVERYONE

How much you enjoy Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis will probably correlate directly with how much you like guiding characters via the stylus. If you're expecting a cerebral platformer in the vein of the original, you may feel a bit disappointed; on the other hand, if you're looking for something a bit more touch driven and puzzle heavy, you're in luck.

What Mario vs. DK 2 does, it does well. The touch control for the Mini-Mario wind-up toys feels smooth and natural, and the stage layouts—more than 70 levels spread out over eight worlds—are excellently designed. The music (a selection of remixed Mario and DK tunes) is also superb. Personally, however, I didn't find the action to be as gripping as it was in the first Mario vs. DK. Interacting with the environments to press switches, turn valves, manipulate platforms, and plenty more is decent fun, but things got exciting only when advanced techniques—such as walking on magnetic surfaces or springing off of rubbery walls—were introduced. I was also surprised at how easily I blew through the game. The original Mario vs. DK really tested me at times, but while the sequel definitely made me think, I rarely felt challenged (except when I was trying to get a record-shattering high score). It's also too bad the boss and bonus stages weren't more imaginative.



However, if you think you can do better, now's your chance to prove it. Mario vs. DK 2's coolest feature, by far, is a fully functional level editor that provides nearly infinite replay value by letting you design your own stages. Not only is the interface superintuitive, but you can share your creations with your friends over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Although you will need to play through the single-player game to unlock all of the editing options, it's a small price to pay. For budding game designers, March of the Minis may be worth picking up for the level editor alone. —CHRIS H.



CAPCOM CLASSICS MINI MIX

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: GAME BOY ADVANCE
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/SENSORY SWEEP
ESRB: TEEN

If you've got a burning desire to relive the glory days of the NES era in portable form, look no further than Capcom Classics Mini Mix. Three full titles—Bionic Commando, Strider, and Mighty Final Fight—are present in all their original glory: the same addictive gameplay, the same charming 8-bit graphics and sound, the same flickering sprites and comical translations.

The rarely imitated and never duplicated Bionic Commando is undoubtedly the gem of Mini Mix, and its grappling-based platforming action is still incredibly challenging and fun. Between its unique mechanics, open-ended gameplay, and RPG-like elements, Bionic Commando is an innovative treat that, for hard-core gamers, is alone worth the price of the collection. Strider is also a worthy inclusion. Although the story-driven, exploration-based gameplay is worlds apart from the more-familiar arcade version of Strider, the NES adaptation is actually considerably deeper; there's a lot to enjoy about the game once you get accustomed to a few control quirks (and the fact that there's more slowdown than in the NES original). Mighty Final Fight—a comedic, cartoony take on the classic arcade brawler—doesn't have quite the staying power of the other two games in Mini Mix (especially since the original Final Fight has been available on GBA for years), but its pick-up-and-play action is moderately enjoyable nonetheless.

Unfortunately, the programmers haven't bothered to add anything to Mini Mix to bring its titles up to modern standards. As fun as Bionic Commando is, the lack of a save function makes it less than ideal for portable gaming, and forget about bells and whistles—there are none. Capcom Classics Mini Mix delivers a triple dose of old-school fun, and as long as you don't expect more than that, you'll be in for a nostalgically good time. —CHRIS H.

CRASH BOOM BANG!

RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: SIERRA
DEVELOPER: DIMPS
ESRB: EVERYONE

The development team that worked on the stellar DS title Sonic Rush follows up with a surprisingly stale installment in the Crash Bandicoot series. Crash Boom Bang! is a Mario Party-esque compilation of minigames starring Crash and friends. The eight party animals compete on six themed boards, occasionally engaging in stylus-controlled minigames to earn points. The premise sounds basic enough, but the gameplay on the boards is so poorly structured that the pacing feels erratic, especially in the game's single-player story mode. But Crash Boom Bang! is clearly meant to be a multiplayer affair. The four-player wireless multiplayer mode does offer some unique features (such as the ability to send visual obstacles to your opponents' screens), and a few of the 40 available minigames are mildly entertaining. But the majority of the game's content seems not fully realized. Unless you're a die-hard fan of the series, you may want to wait for the bandicoot's next offering. —ANDY M.

STAY ON TARGET

LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

RATING: 7.5

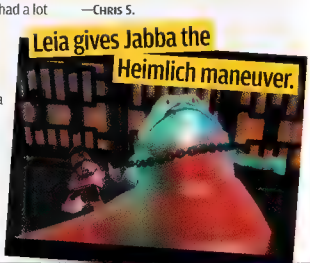
PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

There is probably no cultural phenomenon ingrained into my psyche as much as the original *Star Wars* trilogy. The movies entertain me today the same as they did when I first saw them. But I can't say the same for the prequel trilogy—the prequels just couldn't live up to the lofty standards of the first three films. And, by proxy, the same goes for the many *Star Wars* games that have come out over the years, including LEGO *Star Wars*.

The moment the opening sequence in LEGO *Star Wars* II began, I knew I was going to enjoy the game. I realized very quickly that my ambivalence toward LEGO *Star Wars* had a lot to do with my views on the movies. But more than that, the locations and plot of the original movie trilogy make for a far more interesting video game. From the classic battle on Hoth to the Endor speeder chase, everything feels more vibrant and organic than the previous game's sterile environments inspired by Episodes I through III. The adorable LEGO adaptations also led to some hilarious story moments—the "I am your father" scene from *Empire* is priceless.

For the most part, the structure of the game remains the same as that of its predecessor: You walk, warp, and tauntaun your way across a galaxy far, far away. Along the way, you collect "studs," ubiquitous little LEGO pieces that you can use to unlock cheats and secret characters. The game is broken down into chapters that you can play over and over again to collect more studs and find secret items. But replaying loses its luster after a while as most of the time you're just looking for objects within the environment to hack to bits with a lightsaber.

LEGO *Star Wars* laid the groundwork for a solid sequel, and LEGO *Star Wars* II delivers. It's too bad the reverse wasn't true for the movie trilogies. —CHRIS S.



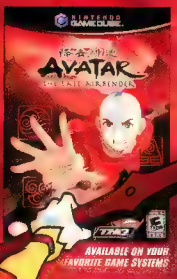
NICKELODEON

降妖神通

AVATAR

THE LAST AIRBENDER

THE VIDEO GAME



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GAMES

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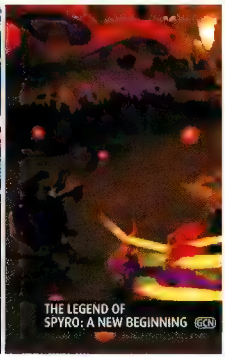
EVERYONE 10+

E

10+

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Cartoon Violence



LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER: AMAZE
ESRB: EVERYONE

At first, LEGO *Star Wars* II on DS seems like a compressed version of its console counterpart. The comical slash-and-blast action can get repetitive, the challenge level is incredibly low (you basically can't lose), and the stages are a lot less ambitious than in the GCN version; but in many ways, the game does an admirable job of re-creating the console experience on DS. At least that was my opinion until I reached the last third of the game—Return of the Jedi—where I encountered haphazard level design, unclear mission goals, suicidal partner AI, graphical glitches, severe slowdown, and sloppy boss battles. On the plus side, the multiplayer modes are fun (when they work), but even playing with friends doesn't prevent a significant chunk of the game from feeling unfinished. Whoever's responsible should be thrown into the Sarlacc pit. —CHRIS H.

THE LEGEND OF SPYRO: A NEW BEGINNING

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: SIERRA
DEVELOPER: KROME
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

As the title implies, A New Beginning hits reset on the Spyro franchise with a new origin story, a new developer (albeit the series' third in as many games), and most significantly, an entirely new gameplay direction. Whereas the dragon's previous outings were primarily platformers, his latest adventure places a greater emphasis on battle and plays more like a beat-'em-up. The series has been in a major rut the past few years, so you can't blame Sierra for trying something different. Unfortunately, the end product fails to return the purple hero to his former glory. The game's overly simplistic combat quickly grows repetitive—a problem exacerbated by levels that tend to drag on and on without enough variety to keep things interesting (the flying stages are nicely done, but they're too few and far between). And although Spyro has an auspicious arsenal of elemental breaths at his disposal, the game doesn't do enough to take advantage of them.

On the bright side, A New Beginning boasts some impressive production values, particularly in the audio department. The soundtrack is a sweeping orchestral score that wouldn't sound out of place in a Hollywood epic, and most of the voice acting is top-notch—Elijah Wood puts in an especially praiseworthy performance as Spyro. Speaking of Frodo, *The Lord of the Rings* was obviously a major source of inspiration for this title; everything from the enemy designs to the narrative recalls Peter Jackson's film trilogy. But while that influence lends the game a certain gravitas, it also feels somewhat out of place (especially when coupled with nonstop wisecracks from dragonfly sidekick Sparx, played by David Spade). If this is indeed a new beginning for Spyro, subsequent installments need to do a better job of finding its identity. For now, we're left with another disappointing entry in a once-great franchise. —STEVE T.

KISS THE COOK

COOKING MAMA

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: MAJESCO
DEVELOPER: TAITO/OFFICE CREATE
ESRB: EVERYONE

Cooking Mama is more fun than it has any right to be. The developers have taken a seemingly mundane activity—cooking—and somehow turned it into a compelling gameplay experience. This was the kind of software I was afraid of when the DS was first announced, yet here I am, grinning from ear to ear while preparing my virtual Salisbury steak. The game gives you more than 70 such entrees to choose from, and plays like a culinary version of WarioWare; each step in a recipe is presented as its own touch-screen minigame. It's simple, frantic (most of the minigames have a time limit), and eminently accessible; the kind of title even your nongaming friends can get into.

My only complaint is that there's not much to it. You prepare the dishes, receive a score based on your performance, and that's it. Without any sort of story mode or overarching objective, the gourmet festivities start to wear thin after a few hours. Perhaps some multiplayer competition (think Iron Chef) and the ability to experiment a little bit (you're forced to follow each recipe to the letter) could have helped Cooking Mama feel more robust. As is, it's a tasty morsel that will appeal especially to connoisseurs of DS oddities like Phoenix Wright and Trauma Center. Bon appetit! —STEVE T.

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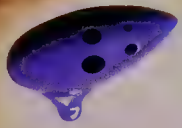

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SCRAMBLED SIGNAL

CONTACT

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS
PUBLISHER: ATLUS
DEVELOPER: GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE/MARVELOUS INTERACTIVE
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Contact is, in a word, frustrating. It's frustrating in the traditional sense because your objectives are often obtuse and unintuitive, and the game can be brutally difficult unless you spend quite a bit of time leveling up (which is fairly tedious given the largely automated battle system). More importantly, it's frustrating because, like Killer 7 (Grasshopper Manufacture's previous effort), it's filled with great ideas but comes up well short of its potential. Although not a bad game by any means, it feels like the developers squandered an opportunity to create something truly special.

The problems start with the story. Contact boasts a fascinating premise that breaks the fourth wall and explores the relationship between video game and player by including you in the narrative. Though you control protagonist Terry, using him to explore dungeons and battle assorted evildoers as you would in any action-RPG, he does not represent you in the game's world. Instead, you the player are treated as a separate character. What's more, your existence is to be kept secret from Terry for reasons that aren't entirely clear at first. It's an intriguing and uniquely engaging set-up that does a great job of drawing you into the adventure. Unfortunately, the game doesn't invest the concept with nearly enough depth to let it develop. You're left waiting until the very end for any sort of payoff, and when it finally comes, it falls shockingly flat.

That same lack of follow-through permeates other aspects of the game. Terry can change into a variety of costumes that grant him new skills and abilities, for instance, but they're tragically underutilized outside of a few minigames. His upgradeable personality traits (such as Fame and Karma) similarly go to waste because your interactions with NPCs are so rudimentary and the actual effects of Terry's personality so minimal. If only the execution of the game's ideas matched their ambition and creativity.

Unfulfilled promise aside, Contact does manage to entertain thanks to an abundance of side quests, appealing visual style, and a wacky sensibility. It's a solid effort; it just seems like it could have and should have been so much more.
—STEVE T.

OPEN SEASON

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAMECUBE
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Games based on movies (often hastily made and formulaic) are usually open season for reviewers. Ubisoft's GCN adaptation of *Open Season*, however, craftily dodges critical pans by offering a fast-paced and funny adventure that gives maximum entertainment and minimal frustration to the members of its young target audience. The game's 25 linear missions, which follow city bear Boog's run-ins with hunters in the woods, skip along at jackrabbit speed, mixing up item searches with shooting-gallery exercises and unexpected pleasures, such as an exciting runaway mine-car ride. Veteran players looking for a challenge will find the game to be far too easy, though. The risk of failure is small, arrows point to goals, and some missions are over before you know it. But clever uses of first-person perspective (you make Boog nod using the C Stick to accept missions), a lot of situations that involve tossing forest creatures (and Boog's buddy Elliot) at hunters, and good sound-alike voice acting (Patrick Wharburton is the only member of the movie cast who provides his own voice in a short cameo) make the game an enjoyable five-to-six-hour play. Seven unlockable four-player minigames and the option to revisit mission areas for item collection add replay value and more time in a well-constructed video game world.
—GEORGE S.

ALSO THIS MONTH

In addition to Ubisoft's GCN adaptation of CG-movie *Open Season* (reviewed this issue), the publisher has **Open Season** for the DS and GBA. The DS game has a 3-D look, but the action follows a clear left-to-right path as you guide bear Boog and deer Elliot, separately or together, sometimes using teamwork to overcome obstacles. The GBA title comes to you in beautiful 2-D and offers Boog as the sole playable character. As you guide the Grizzly through five areas, you'll purchase items from Elliot and call on the help of animals, such as a chain of rabbits who form a bridge, and a chainsaw-carrying beaver who cuts through obstacles. . . . Have you seen that Adidas ad in which kids play soccer with the pros? Humungous Entertainment's Backyard Sports series has been fulfilling that sports fantasy for years. The latest installment is **Backyard Basketball 2007** for the GBA, published by Atari. With 36 teams (most named after NBA squads) and kid versions of top pro players, such as Dirk Nowitzki, Lebron James, Lamar Odom, and MVP Steve Nash, the game is, as ever, a good entry-level sports title. . . . The DS and GBA versions of **The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning** (Sierra) follow the same origin story as the GCN title (reviewed this issue). The DS game does so with an overheard view and touch-controlled manipulation of objects. The GBA title is a side-view platformer with lots of baddie beating and gem collection. . . . The GBA version of **LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy** (LucasArts) offers 16 stages sampled from the classic films, using an isometric view. —GEORGE S.

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[ARCHIVE]

AUTUMN ALL-STARS

Three new Archive entries rated a 9.0 or better. They span systems and categories but have quality in common. Madden NFL 07 (GCN) scored a 9.0 for its tuning and improved running game. Star Fox Command (DS) earned a 9.5-point score for the flawless execution of its strategy-action concept. We honored Dragon Quest Monsters: Rocket Slime (DS) with a 9.0 because it, too, offers a deep and immersive experience. No matter your gaming taste, you'll find something you like in this fine trio.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

2006 FIFA World Cup	7.5	Electronic Arts	204	E
American Chopper 2: Full Throttle	5.0	Activision	201	T
The Ant Bully	5.0	Midway	208	E10+
Barnyard	6.0	THQ	207	E10+
Battalion Wars	8.5	Nintendo	197	T
Bratz: Rock Angelz	N/A	THQ	198	E
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2	2.5	Activision	200	T
Cabela's Outdoor Adventures	6.5	Activision	198	T
Call of Duty 2: Big Red One	7.5	Activision	200	T
Cars	6.5	THQ	206	E
Chaos Field	6.0	0-3	200	E
Chibi-Robo	8.0	Nintendo	201	E10+
Chicken Little	6.0	Buena Vista	198	E10+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	5.5	Buena Vista	199	T
Crash Tag Team Racing	7.0	Vivendi	198	E10+
Curious George	7.0	Namco	202	E
Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix	7.5	Nintendo	198	E
Dora the Explorer: Journey to the Purple Planet	N/A	Global Star	198	EC
FIFA Soccer 06	9.0	Electronic Arts	197	E
FIFA Street 2	7.0	Electronic Arts	203	E
Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance	9.5	Nintendo	197	T
Frogger: Ancient Shadow	5.5	Konami	197	E
From Russia with Love	7.0	Electronic Arts	199	T
Gun	8.0, 8.5	Activision	199	M
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Harvest Moon: Magical Melody	9.0, 9.5	Natsume	203	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	5.0	Vivendi	203	E10+
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	7.5	THQ	198	E10+
Kao the Kangaroo: Round 2	2.5	Atari	203	E
Karaoke Revolution Party	8.0	Konami	199	E10+
Kids Next Door: Operation V.I.D.E.O.G.A.M.E.	N/A	Global Star	198	E10+
LEGO Star Wars	6.5	Eidos	198	E
Madden NFL 07	9.0	Electronic Arts	208	E
Major League Baseball 2K6	7.0, 6.5, 6.0	2K Sports	205	E
Mario Party 7	7.5	Nintendo	199	E
Mark Davis: Pro Bass Challenge	5.0	Natsume	198	E
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	7.0	Electronic Arts	197	T
Mega Man X Collection	8.5	Capcom	200	E
Midway Arcade Treasures 3	6.5	Midway	197	E
Monster House	6.5	THQ	207	E10+
Namco 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection	7.0	Namco	197	E10+
Naruto: Clash of Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	203	T
NBA Live 06	5.5	Electronic Arts	198	E
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	T
NHL 06	8.5	Electronic Arts	198	E10+
Nicktoons: Nicktoons Unite!	N/A	THQ	198	E
Odama	8.5	Nintendo	203	E10+
One Piece: Grand Battle	6.5	Bandai	197	T
One Piece: Grand Adventure	5.5	Namco Bandai	208	T
Over the Hedge	6.0	Activision	205	E10+
Pac-Man World 3	7.0	Namco	199	E
Pac-Man World Rally	5.5	Namco Bandai	208	E
Peter Jackson's King Kong	9.0	Ubisoft	200	T
Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness	8.5	Nintendo	197	E
Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones	9.0	Ubisoft	200	M
Rampage: Total Destruction	6.5	Midway	204	E10+
Scooby-Doo!: Unmasked	7.5	THQ	197	E

REVIEWER NOTES

MADDEN NFL 2007

I love Madden as much as anyone, but there just aren't enough hours in a day for me to really dig into its amazing nuances. That's where I find that Madden really shines, however; even if I don't have time to master the creative little touches that they add every year, I can enjoy the game just the same. Kudos to the team for making the game easy and fun to pick up, regardless of the player's skill level. —Chris S.

>STAR FOX COMMAND

After two sub-par GCN outings, Command marks something of a return to form for the Star Fox series. I wouldn't put it in the same league as the SNES and N64 games, but it's a step in the right direction.

—Steve T.

DRAGON QUEST MONSTERS: ROCKET SLIME

And the winner for the unlikeliest star of an action-adventure is . . . If you've beaten up on a slime in the opening minutes of a Dragon Quest title, you could have a hard time thinking of an easily defeated blue blob as a hero, but Rocket Slime's elastic saver of imprisoned creatures will change your mind. Adventure mixed with gargantuan tank battles will make you rethink action-RPGs, too. —George S.

>SONIC GEMS COLLECTION

In case you're unaware, 2006 is Sonic's 15th anniversary, and there's no better way to celebrate than by playing Sonic Gems Collection. Sonic CD, the collection highlight, ranks among the best platformers ever made.

—Chris H.

Shadow the Hedgehog	8.0	Sega	199	E10+
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	8.5	Electronic Arts	199	T
Sonic Riders	8.0	Sega	203	E
Spartan: Total Warrior	8.5	Sega	197	M
SSX On Tour	8.0	Electronic Arts	198	E10+
Super Mario Strikers	7.5	Nintendo	199	E
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	5.5	Nintendo	208	E
Tak: The Great Juju Challenge	8.5	THQ	197	E
Teen Titans	6.0	Majesco	204	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare	4.0	Konami	199	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06	9.0	Electronic Arts	197	E
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	9.0	Activision	198	T
True Crime: New York City	8.0	Activision	199	M
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger: Night of the Quinkan	6.0	Activision	198	E10+
Ultimate Spider-Man	9.0	Activision	198	T
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	6.5	Capcom	199	T
World Series of Poker	4.5	Activision	198	E10+
WWE: Day of Reckoning 2	8.0	THQ	197	T
X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse	7.5	Activision	198	T
X-Men: The Official Game	6.5	Activision	205	T
Zatch Bell!: Mamodo Battles	6.0	Bandai	198	T

NINTENDO DS

	2006 FIFA World Cup	7.0	Electronic Arts	204	E
	Age of Empires: The Age of Kings	8.0	Majesco	201	E10+
	Alex Rider: Stormbreaker	4.5	THQ	208	T
•	Animal Crossing: Wild World	9.5, 8.5	Nintendo	199	E
	Battles of Prince of Persia	6.5	Ubisoft	200	E10+
	Blades of Thunder 2	4.5	Summitsoft	201	E10+
	Break 'Em All	7.0	D3PA	206	E
	Bubble Bobble Revolution	6.0	Codemasters	208	E
	Burnout Legends	N/A	Electronic Arts	199	E
	Bust-a-Move DS	7.5	Majesco	200	E
	Cars	5.5	THQ	206	E
	Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow	9.0	Konami	197	T
	The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	7.0	Buena Vista	199	E10+
	Deep Labyrinth	6.0	Atlus	208	E10+
	Dig Dug Digging Strike	7.0	Namco	198	E
	Dino Master	5.5	Majesco	205	E
	Disney's American Dragon: Jake Long—Attack of the Dark Dragon	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
	Dragon Ball Z: Supersonic Warriors 2	5.0	Atari	199	E10+
	Dragon Booster	6.0	Konami	200	E
	Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime	9.0	Square Enix	208	E
	Electroplankton	8.5	Nintendo	200	E
	Elf Bowling 1 & 2	N/A	Ignition	200	T
	FIFA Soccer 06	8.0	Electronic Arts	198	E
	FIFA Street 2	6.0	Electronic Arts	203	E
	Finding Nemo: Escape to the Big Blue	5.0	THQ	202	E
	Ford Racing 3	N/A	Destination	198	E
	Franklin's Great Adventures	N/A	American Game Factory	200	E
	Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
	Golden Nugget Casino DS	6.5	Majesco	201	T
	Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	N/A	Activision	201	E10+
	Guilty Gear Dust Strikers	7.0	Majesco	204	T
	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
	Harvest Moon DS	6.0	Natsume	208	E
	Hi Hi Puffy Amiyumi: The Genie and the Amp	4.5	D3PA	206	E10+
	Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	4.0	Vivendi	203	E
	The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	5.5	THQ	199	E10+
	Kim Possible: Kimmunicator	6.0	Buena Vista	198	E
	Konductra	N/A	0-3	208	E
	Lost in Blue	8.0	Konami	197	E10+
•	LostMagic	8.0, 7.0	Ubisoft	204	E
	Lunar: Dragon Song	7.0	Ubisoft	197	E10+
	Madden NFL 07	7.5	Electronic Arts	208	E
	Magnetica	8.0	Nintendo	205	E
•	Mario Kart DS	9.0	Nintendo	199	E
	Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time	9.0	Nintendo	199	E
	Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	5.0	Electronic Arts	198	E10+
	Mega Man Battle Network 5: Double Team DS	7.0	Capcom	198	E
	Mega Man ZX	8.5	Capcom	208	E
•	Metroid Prime Hunters	8.5, 8.0	Nintendo	203	T
	Metroid Prime Pinball	9.5	Nintendo	198	E
	Mini RC Rally	N/A	Summitsoft	204	E
	Monopoly/Boggle/Battleship	7.0	Atari	200	E
	Monster House	5.5	THQ	207	E
	Need for Speed: Most Wanted	6.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
	New Super Mario Bros.	9.5, 9.5, 9.5, 9.5	Nintendo	205	E
	Nicktoons: Nicktoons Unite!	N/A	THQ	198	E
	Over the Hedge	6.0	Activision	205	E
	Pac-Man World 3	3.0	Namco	200	E
	Peter Jackson's King Kong	3.5	Ubisoft	200	T
	Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney	8.0	Capcom	197	T

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	6.0	Buena Vista	206	T
Point Blank DS	6.0	Namco Bandai	206	E10+
Pokémon Trozei	8.5	Nintendo	202	E
Rainbow Islands Revolution	4.5	Codemasters	208	E
Real Time Conflict: Shogun Empires	7.0	Namco	198	E10+
Resident Evil: Deadly Silence	8.5	Capcom	202	M
The Rub Rabbits!	8.0	Sega	201	T
SBK: Snowboard Kids	7.5	Atlus	199	E
Sega Casino	6.0	Sega	199	T
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	5.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Snood 2: On Vacation	N/A	Destination	199	E
Sonic Rush	9.0	Sega	199	E
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Yellow Avenger	3.5	THQ	198	E
Spyro: Shadow Legacy	6.5	Vivendi	198	E
Star Fox Command	9.5	Nintendo	208	E10+
The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Super Black Bass Fishing	4.5	Majesco	204	E
Super Monkey Ball: Touch & Roll	6.5, 7.5	Sega	201	E
Super Princess Peach	7.5	Nintendo	202	E
Tak: The Great Juju Challenge	7.5	THQ	197	E
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop	5.0	Bandai	201	E
Tao's Adventure: Curse of the Demon Seal	6.0	Konami	203	E
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3: Mutant Nightmare	6.0	Konami	198	E
Tenchu: Dark Secret	5.0	Nintendo	208	T
Tetris DS	9.5	Nintendo	203	E
Texas Hold 'Em Poker DS	5.0	Majesco	198	E
Texas Hold 'Em Poker Pack	N/A	Summitsoft	200	E
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Lockdown	6.0	Ubisoft	197	M
Tony Hawk's American SkBland	8.0	Activision	199	E
Top Gun	4.0	Mastiff	202	E10+
Top Spin 2	6.0	2K Games	200	E
Trace Memory	8.5	Nintendo	197	T
Trauma Center: Under the Knife	9.0	Atlus	198	T
True Swing Golf	8.0	Nintendo	201	E
Ultimate Spider-Man	6.5	Activision	198	E10+
Viewtiful Joe: Double Trouble	7.0	Capcom	198	T
Whac-A-Mole	N/A	Activision Value	197	E
Worms: Open Warfare	7.0	THQ	202	E10+
X-Men: The Official Game	7.0	Activision	205	E10+
Zoo Tycoon DS	7.5	THQ	197	E
GAME BOY ADVANCE				
2006 FIFA World Cup	7.5	Electronic Arts	204	E
Alex Rider: Stormbreaker	N/A	THQ	208	E10+
The Ant Bully	N/A	Midway	208	E
Atomic Betty	N/A	Namco	198	E
ATV Quad Frenzy	N/A	Majesco	199	E
Babar to the Rescue	N/A	The Game Factory	206	E
Backyard Baseball 2007	3.5	Atari	204	E
Backyard Football 2006	N/A	Atari	197	E
Backyard Skateboarding	N/A	Atari	198	E
Barbie and the Magic of Pegasus	N/A	Vivendi	197	E
Barnyard	6.5	THQ	207	E
Battle B-Daman	6.5	Atlus	207	E
The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree	N/A	Namco	197	E
The Bible Game	N/A	Crave	197	E
Big Mutha Truckers	N/A	Destination	199	E10+
Bionicle: Maze of Shadows	N/A	THQ	198	E
Board Game Classics	N/A	Destination	197	E
Bratz: Rock Angelz	N/A	THQ	198	E
Cabbage Patch Kids: The Patch Puppy Rescue	N/A	D3PA	204	E
Candy Land/Chutes & Ladders/ Memory	N/A	Destination	200	E
Care Bears: Care Quest	N/A	The Game Factory	200	EC
Cars	6.5	THQ	206	E
Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance/ Aria of Sorrow Double Pack	9.0	Konami	202	T
Catz	N/A	Ubisoft	204	E
Centipede Compilation	5.0	Destination	197	E
The Cheetah Girls	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Chicken Little	N/A	Buena Vista	198	E
Chicken Shoot	N/A	Destination	198	E10+
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe	N/A	Buena Vista	199	E
Connect Four Compilation	5.0	Destination	197	E
Curious George	7.0	Namco	202	E
Danny Phantom: The Ultimate Enemy	N/A	THQ	197	E
Disney's American Dragon: Jake Long— Rise of the Huntsclan	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E10+
Dk: King of Swing	8.0	Nintendo	197	E
Dogz	N/A	Ubisoft	199	E
Donkey Kong Country 3	8.0	Nintendo	198	E
Dr. Mario & Puzzle League	7.0	Nintendo	199	E
Dr. Sudoku	6.0	Mastiff	203	E
Dragon Ball: Advanced Adventure	7.0	Atari	203	E10+
Drill Dozer	9.0	Nintendo	201	E
Driv3r	5.5	Atari	198	T
Duel Masters: Shadow of the Code	5.5	Atari	198	E
Elf Bowling 1 & 2	N/A	Ignition	200	T
evenGirl	N/A	THQ	198	E
The Fairly OddParents!: Clash with the Anti-World	N/A	THQ	199	E
FIFA Soccer 06	7.0	Electronic Arts	198	E
Final Fantasy IV Advance	9.0	Nintendo	200	E10+
Ford Racing 3	N/A	Destination	198	E
Franklin the Turtle	N/A	American Game Factory	200	EC
The Game of Life/Yahtzee/Payday	N/A	Destination	200	E
Games Explosion!	4.0	THQ	208	E
Garfield and His Nine Lives	5.0	American Game Factory	204	E
Garfield: The Search for Pooky	N/A	American Game Factory	200	E
Gauntlet Compilation	6.5	Destination	197	E
Greg Hastings' Tournament Paintball Max'd	N/A	Activision	200	E10+
Gunstar Super Heroes	9.5	Sega	198	E10+
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	8.0	Electronic Arts	199	E
Hello Kitty: Happy Party Pals	N/A	THQ	199	E
Hi Hi Puffy Amiyumi: Kaznapped!	6.5	D3PA	199	E
Ice Age 2: The Meltdown	4.0	Vivendi	203	E
The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer	N/A	THQ	199	E
KLAX Compilation	4.0	Destination	197	E
Koala Brothers: Outback Adventures	N/A	American Game Factory	200	EC
Kong: King of Atlantis	N/A	Majesco	200	E
Kong: The 8th Wonder of the World	6.0	Ubisoft	200	E10+
The Land Before Time: Into the Mysterious Beyond	N/A	American Game Factory	201	E
Let's Ride! Dreamer	N/A	THQ	203	E
Lizzie McGuire 3	N/A	Buena Vista	197	E
Madagascar: Operation Penguin	N/A	Activision	199	E
Madden NFL 07	7.0	Electronic Arts	208	E
Majesco's Sports Pack	N/A	Majesco	201	E10+
Mario Tennis: Power Tour	7.0	Nintendo	199	E
Mega Man Battle Network 6: Cybeast Gregar & Cybeast Falzar	7.5	Capcom	206	E
Mega Man Zero 4	8.5	Capcom	198	E
Millipede Compilation	5.0	Destination	197	E
Miss Spider's Harvest Time Hop & Fly	N/A	The Game Factory	206	E
Monster House	5.0	THQ	207	E
Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection	5.5	Namco	197	E
Naruto: Ninja Council	4.0	Tomy/D3PA	203	E10+
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	N/A	Electronic Arts	199	E
Nicktoons: Nicktoons Unite!	N/A	THQ	198	E
The Nightmare Before Christmas: The Pumpkin King	6.5	Buena Vista	198	E10+
One Piece	8.0	Bandai	197	E10+
Operation/Mouse Trap/Simon	N/A	Destination	200	E
Over the Hedge	3.5	Activision	205	E
Pac-Man World 2	6.0	Destination	197	E
Paperboy Compilation	5.5	Destination	197	E
Paws & Claws Resort	N/A	THQ	203	E
Phil of the Future	N/A	Buena Vista	208	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest	7.5	Buena Vista	206	E10+
Pocket Dogs	N/A	0-3	200	E
Pong Compilation	5.5	Destination	197	E
The Proud Family	N/A	Buena Vista	199	E
Rebelstar: Tactical Command	7.0	Namco	197	E10+
Rec Room Challenge	N/A	Majesco	200	E
Risk Compilation	7.0	Destination	197	E
Scrabble Jr. Compilation	4.5	Destination	197	E
Shrek Superslam	N/A	Activision	199	E10+
The Sims 2	7.5	Electronic Arts	199	E10+
Sky Dancers	N/A	Crave	199	E
Snood 2: On Vacation	N/A	Destination	199	E
Spy Hunter Compilation	4.5	Destination	197	E
SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	5.5	Destination	201	T
Sudoku Fever	4.0	Global Star	202	E
Sudoku Mania	N/A	UFO Interactive	206	E
Summon Night: Swordcraft Story	8.0	Atlus	207	E10+
Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation	6.5	Atlus	207	T
Tak: The Great Juju Challenge	4.0	THQ	197	E
Tales of Phantasia	8.5	Nintendo	202	E10+
Teen Titans	6.0	Majesco	198	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Double Pack	N/A	Konami	206	E
Tony Hawk's American SkBland	6.0	Activision	199	E
Top Spin 2	N/A	2K Games	200	E
Totally Spies!	5.5	Atari	201	E
The Tower SP	7.0	Sega	203	E
Tringo	N/A	Crave	200	E
Trolls: Hair Affair	N/A	Ubisoft	199	E
Ultimate Arcade Games	N/A	Telegames	198	E
Ultimate Spider-Man	6.0	Activision	198	E10+
The Wild	N/A	Buena Vista	204	E
W.I.T.C.H.	N/A	Buena Vista	197	E
X-Men: The Official Game	3.5	Activision	205	E10+
Yu-Gi-Oh! GX Duel Academy	6.0	Konami	201	E
Yu-Gi-Oh! Ultimate Masters—World Championship Tournament 2006	6.0	Konami	204	E
Zatch Bell!: Electric Arena	N/A	Bandai	198	E10+

>FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE

It's been a year since the Intelligent Systems-developed turn-based battler made the switch to consoles with it flawless GCN debut—definitely worth checking out while we continue to wait for news on the Wii game.

—George S.

PAC-MAN WORLD RALLY

I think Chris S. was unduly harsh in his review of Pac-Man World Rally last month. It's true that the game doesn't do much new for the kart-racing genre, but it fits it well, with a nice assortment of courses, characters, and power-ups. If you're a fan of solid kart racers (but not a jaded curmudgeon like Chris S.), check it out. Oh, and the music rocks. —Chris H.

>FINAL FANTASY I & II: DAWN OF SOULS

With FINAL FANTASY III on the horizon, I've decided to complete FINAL FANTASY II once and for all. It's a chapter of the FINAL FANTASY story that gets overlooked in North America, where its release followed the Japanese version's launch by many years. It's still a good game that any fan should play.

—Pete M.

HARVEST MOON DS

The Harvest Moon series has a magical way of making mundane activities (such as digging holes and chopping wood) fun. While Harvest Moon DS has a handful of clever new features, the game's ease of item organization (thanks to the touch screen) has prompted a more-is-better attitude within the game's economy; it now takes much more lumber to build your first barn, for instance. Unfortunately, the inflation only makes the in-game activities feel more like what they're simulating—chores. —Andy M.

MUSIC

Fusion Reaches New Heights

With the Nintendo Fusion Tour less than a month away, we caught up with headline group Hawthorne Heights and talked Wii, breaking the law, and Kevin Bacon.

Nintendo Power: Hawthorne Heights has a pretty crazy fan base. How do you guys feel about your fans?
Micah Carli: We're very grateful. They've been so supportive to us.
JT Woodruff: Over the course of the last three years, everybody's been really cool. We don't get very many creeps, or stalker-types. [laughs] Some bands get weirdos, but our fans are really nice. We couldn't ask for anything better.

NP: Do you ever get the impression that they're gamers?
Matt Ridenour: I'm sure they are. They at least eat Nintendo cereal. [laughs]

NP: You guys do a lot of touring. Will the Nintendo Fusion Tour be a change of pace at all?
Casey Calvert: It will be a little different. It's our second headlining tour, and we have a much bigger production than we've ever had.

NP: Do you guys generally play games on tour?
Micah: Oh, dude . . . [laughs]
Eron Bucciarelli: We all own Nintendo DSs.
JT: DS Lites . . . we upgraded.
Casey: We've all got Mario Kart, including our [road] crew.
JT: Right now, we're going to let you in on some insider information. We break the law when riding airplanes. They always tell you to not have any sort of wireless network running, but . . .
Casey: We play eight-person Mario Kart on the plane.
Eron: Or on the bus.
JT: We do it on the bus a whole bunch, but we definitely break the law on the plane.

NP: Did you guys grow up as gamers?
Eron: I started off with the old Atari 2600, but eventually I moved up to the Nintendo, with Mario and Duck Hunt on the same cartridge . . . that was pretty awesome.
JT: That was the Action Set. Yeah, I think all of us—well, at least four of us—prefer the Mario-based games, so we've always been Nintendo people.

NP: You guys are clearly old-school gamers. What kind of games are you playing now?
Matt: Animal Crossing for DS. It's ridiculous.
JT: You know what we're waiting for? We're waiting for Mario Hoops 3-on-3.
Casey: I'm waiting on Final Fantasy III.
JT: That new Zelda game for Wii looks crazy.
Matt: With Animal Crossing, I haven't played it in a while because I caught everything. I have to wait until winter so I can catch some more stuff. Now, I've just got to pull weeds.
JT: [Pointing toward Micah] He's been playing Tiger Woods.
Casey: New Super Mario Bros.

NP: The Fusion Tour's been sort of a big launch point for other bands in the past—Panic! at the Disco and Fall Out Boy, Evanescence before them—do you guys see this as a way to get more exposure?
JT: Yeah, for sure. When we were thinking about what we should do in the fall, it was definitely at the top of our list because it had been a launch pad for other bands. But also, you know, we're big gaming dudes. So . . .
Matt: It's cool to do a tour for something we actually enjoy, instead of an energy drink or something.
JT: The [Fusion] Tour just has a great track record for attendance. It's well run, the sponsors are great, it's well promoted.

NP: The Fusion Tour is all about this intersection between games and music. Do you think that your love for games affects the music you play, or how you play it?
Micah: We don't really write songs about Mario. [laughs] I don't know if I'd say that the games actually influence the songs we write, but I mean, games are a part of our lives. . . .
Matt: In a way, I think, when I was younger, I played video games therefore I was a nerd, therefore I was in marching band, therefore I played guitar.
Micah: Six degrees of Kevin Bacon. [laughs]
JT: I think that there's definitely a correlation there, because now, video games have bands on the soundtrack. Whereas in the past, when we were growing up, it just used to be people would actually score the game. And now, you know, we're on one game [soundtrack] where it's nothing but a bunch of Victory Records bands.
Matt: And I think every band we've ever toured with plays video games. It's the one common thing.

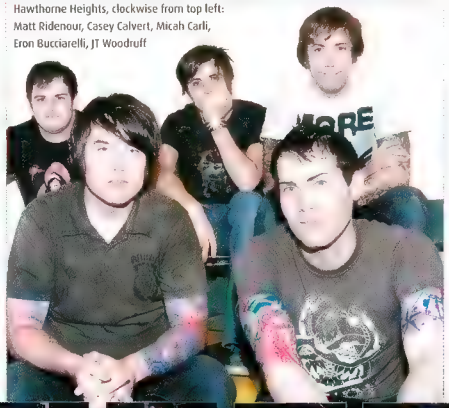
NP: Which one of you guys is the biggest gamer?
Micah: Probably Matt. Or—maybe Casey.
JT: Those two guys always have a game going.
Matt: I literally base my day around Animal Crossing. Like, I go to bed early, so I can wake up because the store's only open at a certain time.

NP: Any of you guys have any game-related tattoos?
Matt: No, but we talk about it all the time.
JT: If this Mario Hoops game is as good as we think it's going to be, I might just get Mario dunking on my arm.

NP: So, we recently learned that Nintendo Wii will be playable on the tour. Is playing Wii before the rest of the world something that you guys are looking forward to?
Matt: Yes, definitely. We already held the controller, so that was the teaser.
JT: We were pretty impressed. I didn't know that that's what it was going to be like. I just thought it would just be, you know, the next Nintendo system. But it looks like it's going to be something totally different than anybody's done before.
Matt: And it makes me happy that it's not $8,000, like the other systems are going to be.

NP: Right on. Thanks guys.

Hawthorne Heights, clockwise from top left: Matt Ridenour, Casey Calvert, Micah Carli, Eron Bucciarelli, JT Woodruff



COLLECTION

Virtual Reality

A lot of the collections that we receive are massive piles of games that span every platform and generation. Long-time NP-reader Shawn took a different approach--his entire collection focuses on the infamous Virtual Boy, the short-lived 3-D game system released in 1995. We're still big-time Virtual Boy fans, so this collection particularly caught our eye. Shawn has so many VB nicknacks, his collection is too big to show. Along with a full catalog of games and store-display units, he also has clothes and framed posters. —**Chris S.**

ART

Extra Credit

When Ohio student Jeffrey S. was asked by his art teacher to create a mural in the halls of his high school, how could he pass up the opportunity to represent the greatest game series ever made? Knowing that the painting would be a permanent installment on the school's wall, Jeffrey enlisted fellow Zelda fans Matthew K. and Joe D. The trio spent a full two months working on the mural, and as you can see, it turned out beautifully. If there's a letter grade higher than A+, these guys should get it. —**Andy M.**

EVENTS

Mew York City

Pokéfans know how to party. More than 25,000 of them came to the Pokémon Party of the Decade on Aug. 8 at New York City's Bryant Park to wish Pokémon a happy 10th birdday. At the event, two Pokémon Video Game National Champions were crowned, gamers demoed the newest Pokémon video games, more than 11,000 bottles of water were given away, and Hulk Hogan and his pythons inspired the Nationals competitors. The centerpiece of the event was a giant Flying Pikachu from the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Close to 3,500 partygoers brought their Pokémon game paks to receive one of the top 20 Pokémon (as voted on by fans at Pokemon.com). —**Terry D.**

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Get plugged in and geek out with the rest of the Nintendo community.

FUSION TOUR--GET YOUR HANDS ON NINTENDO Wii!
Sept. 27-Nov. 11, 2006

Aside from the great bands, the 2006 Fusion Tour marks one of the first opportunities for the general public to play Wii. The action kicks off in Columbus, Ohio for a 46-day tour across the country--check www.nintendofusiontour.com to find out when it's coming to a city near you.

EA'S MADDEN CHALLENGE
Sept. 1-Nov. 26, 2006

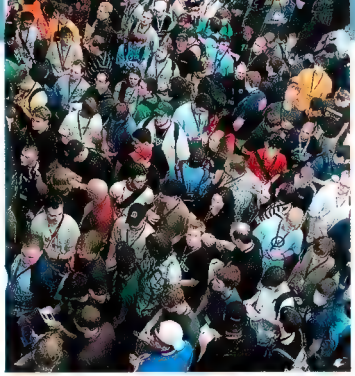
Electronic Arts is on a mission to find the world's greatest Madden NFL '07 player. The Madden Challenge tour is already underway across the US; visit www.maddenchallenge.com to learn more.

MLG'S SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE PLAYOFFS
Oct. 13-15, 2006

Some of the worlds best Smashers will be competing in Major League Gaming's official playoff event, set to take place at the Digital Life Expo in New York City. Visit www.mlgpro.com for info on how to register.

ANIMAL CROSSING ITEM GIVEAWAYS
Oct. 20, 2006

Each Friday, Nintendo sends a letter with an attached item to all residents of Animal Crossing: Wild World; all you have to do to receive it is connect to Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. Keep an eye out for the October 20th giveaway in particular, as Nintendo is planning to send out an especially valuable item that day in honor of the Clubhouse Games launch.



In the exhibition hall, demos and downloads were available for the the ubiquitous DS.

Three's a Crowd

Penny Arcade's third annual expo (PAX) packed them in for three days of gaming, competing, and rocking out.

"If you have your own controller, raise it in the air!" A volunteer wearing a black "Enforcer" T-shirt stood on a chair as he addressed the throng filing into the Super Smash Bros. Melee tournament. Competitors were scrambling to practice when the coordinators announced that 32 groups of participants were assigned to 24 stations. Over the PA: "If you are on standby, please stay here until we find out what the heck is going on." This is PAX: year three, two hours in, an hour off schedule, and much too big for Bellevue, Washington's Meydenbauer Center. Looking at the faces of the attendees, though, you'd see that there was not a trace of frustration. Everyone was just happy to be among their own kind. The sentiment was echoed at a panel discussion with Penny Arcade's Gabe and Tycho (Mike Krahulik and Jerry Holkins), when during a marriage proposal, the groom-to-be told his fiance that she would be accepted by those who shared his passion for gaming culture.

You could see all sides of gaming: communal play in the console area where Smash Bros., Donkey Konga, Halo 2, and Guitar Hero ruled; dice-and-card competition in the tabletop section; and PC play in a room where participants, illuminated only by the glow of their monitors, clicked away at keyboards like worker bees. And, no matter where you went, you would see the DS. As attendees waited in line for movie screenings and group discussions, kicked back on beanbags at the wireless lounge, or strolled through the exhibition hall, they had their DS systems in hand, monitoring PictoChat rooms and challenging each other to matches. There were so many people with the handhelds, in fact, that the 120 participants of a Mario Kart DS tourney had to move to the parking garage to keep others from jumping in. Another use for the DS was discovered, too. During a performance by the Video Game Pianist, Martin Leung, members of the audience swayed to the classical arrangements of gaming's greatest hits with their DS systems held high, lighting up the room.

NP's Andy Myers provided Game Boy accompaniment on Optimus Rhyme's "Obey the Moderator."

After VGP, who wore a suit jacket over a Super Mario Bros. 3 T-shirt, closed his set with the Super Mario Bros. theme (played blindfolded), Optimus Rhyme, then the NESkimos, took the stage. The next night, the crowd was treated to MC Frontalot's Nerdcore and NES covers by the Minibosses.

In the six-stage Omegathon, with a Scion xB on the line, competitors went through the gauntlet of gaming disciplines: tabletop, console, PC, rhythm, and handheld. In the final round, last year's second-place finisher, Leroy, beat his opponent, Davertron, at Tetris, with ease. Rating a three-day attendance of 19,323, PAX proved to be a winner, too. Next year, the growing gamer mecca will move to Seattle's Washington State Convention Center. —**George S.**

Standard equipment for PAX goers: shorts, sandals, and the DS.

Rider on the Storm

We sat down with Anthony Horowitz, creator of the Alex Rider series, to talk books, movies, and video games. (Visit www.nintendo.com for a full version of the interview.)

NP: Though the Alex Rider books have been incredibly successful on a worldwide level, many of our [North American] readers are likely new to the Alex Rider universe. Can you explain a little bit about who Alex Rider is, and what he does?
AH: Alex Rider is a 14-year-old British kid—very ordinary in many ways—who gets sucked unwillingly into the Secret Service when his uncle, who is a spy, gets killed. He then has a series of fairly tough adventures, in which he finds himself up against megalomaniacs of one sort or another with plans to do damage on a cosmic scale.

NP: Some of Alex's appeal is due to the interesting gadgets that he uses. What's the philosophy behind designing gadgets for Alex Rider?
AH: I have just two main rules. The first thing is they've got to be something a teenager would have in his pocket. And the second thing is they've got to be realistic. I don't like things that are sort of beyond credibility, like keys that shoot out lasers, or invisible cars, or jetpacks. They've got to have scientific reality. And also, they should be nonlethal—that's a third rule—because my publishers and the filmmakers get uptight if they're too dangerous.

NP: What sort of gadgets will we see in the movie?
AH: Well, all the gadgets from the book are there. So you've got the zit cream that can dissolve metal. You've got the yo-yo that can be used to scale walls. And you've got the Nintendo [DS], of course, which has many uses throughout the film. In addition, there's one new gadget—but you have to see the movie to see what it is.

NP: Fair enough. How did it come about that Alex would use a DS in the movie?
AH: Well, there was a Game Boy in the book originally, and when the producers were casting around to see what to use, the newer version of the Game Boy—something a little bit cooler than the Game Boy—turned out to be the Nintendo DS. We looked at about two or three different pocket-sized game systems, but the DS was the one they just liked the most. And I think the fact that Nintendo were willing to come in and produce a special red edition, and do a game as well based on the movie, clinched it.

NP: Do you personally own a DS?
AH: I certainly do. I've got one of the new edition red ones, and I've actually gotten to level six of the [Stormbreaker] game. Which for somebody over the age of 40 is pretty good going.

Nintendo DS will enjoy its big-screen debut alongside Ewan McGregor, Alex Pettyfer, and Mickey Rourke in *Stormbreaker*, which hits theaters October 2nd.

Now That's Dedication!

You may love Nintendo, but probably not as much as these guys do. As of late, we've been receiving a ton of photos of Nintendo-themed tattoos, so we thought we'd feature some of our favorites this month. Got a game-related tat? Send a photo to community@nintendopower.com. —Andy M.

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Grant B., Rick D., Frank O., Marc C., Marc C. (again), Joseph C., Rick D. (again)

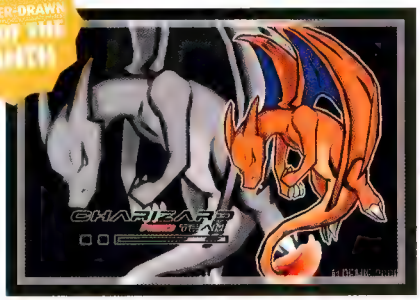
OUCH!

ONLINE

Cave Paintings

Despite the hip, pixelated style featured in Pokémon Mystery Dungeon, most of this month's artists went in a different direction. And the designs were all very original, as you can see by the work of our two winners.

JULY'S COMPUTER-DRAWN ART OF THE MONTH



ARTIST: DEMIE

SUBJECT: POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON

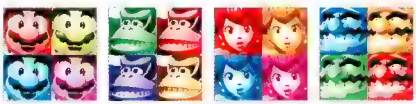
JULY'S ART OF THE MONTH

ARTIST: BLUEKECLEON15

SUBJECT: POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON

Looking to submit art for the first time and not sure what to do? Visit **forums.nintendo.com** for details. Be sure to read the rules before you post your masterpieces.

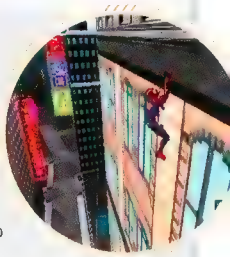
Custom-Made Avatars — **By A. W. Catechi**



NSider Reviews

As our reviewer dutifully points out, we're all pretty anxious to see the next Spider-Man title. For now, we'll make do with this underrated superhero gem.

NSider Review of the Month



Ultimate Spider-Man

reviewed by #1_ALF_FAN

If you're a fan of Spider-Man but just can't bear to wait until Spider-Man 3 comes out, Ultimate Spider-Man for the GameCube may be just what you need to tide yourself over.

Thanks to some great cel-shaded graphics, everything in this game looks like it was hand drawn for the pages of a comic book, proving you don't need astronomical numbers of polygons to make a game look appealing.

The gameplay is also quite polished. Spider-Man's web-swinging mechanics have been tweaked since 2004's Spider-Man 2 game, which may make it a bit frustrating for veterans of that game to switch to the new button layout. However, in a relatively short time, it starts to feel quite natural. Spider-Man's fighting mechanics are also very satisfying, encouraging you to "fight like Spider-Man" by using combos and switching targets to net damage multipliers.

The story is satisfying, but far too short; a skilled player can easily finish it in around 10 hours. Races and hidden tokens scattered through the city unlock pictures of New York landmarks, comic-book covers, and new costumes for Spider-Man, but these rewards will likely only appeal to the die-hard Spidey fan and leave little incentive for most other players to keep playing past the main story. Also, you can't freely roam the city as the real star of the show, Venom, until you complete the main story.

Nevertheless, Ultimate Spider-Man is a great game that should not be missed. If you haven't already, I highly recommend checking it out.

Let your voice be heard!

If you'd like to submit a review for NP, first become an Nsider at Nintendo.com. Then head to the Reviews forum and submit your game critique. Reviews are selected based on overall writing quality, objectivity, and game knowledge.

GOT THAT SPECIAL SOMETHING THAT BELONGS IN THE COMMUNITY SECTION? DROP US A LINE AT COMMUNITY@NINTENDOPOWER.COM.

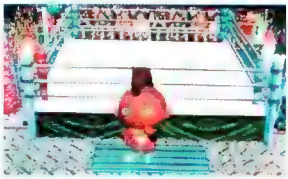
Beat It!

This Halloween, leave your vampire costume at home and go as one of the hipster Elite Beat Agents! Then, send photos of your awesome costume to us at community@nintendopower.com. We'll choose the best ones and show them in a future Community section. —CHRIS S.

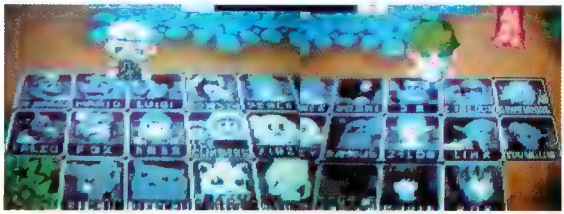
ART

Crossing Over

We're always trying to think of new ways to customize our towns in Animal Crossing: Wild World—imagine our excitement when our readers began sending us photos of their custom towns. If you've got a town you'd like to show off, send a photo to community@nintendopower.com. —ANDY.



TOUCHIN pities the fool who doesn't wipe his feet when entering his Mr. T-themed home.



Wild World inhabitants Vaztor (left) and *MARIO* (right) painstakingly created this sweet representation of the character-select screen from Super Smash Bros. Melee. Nice teamwork, guys!

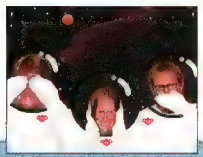
ONLINE

Gravity Games

Camp Hyrule 2006 is over, but not soon forgotten! This year's attendance was the largest ever—over 9,000 campers showed up to partake in the week's festivities. The theme was outer space; every day, campers participated in events to restore gravity to the camp, which attracted new areas to visit. The activities included minigames and arts-and-crafts contests. Congratulations to the campers of Cabin 9 for winning the best cabin award for their outstanding effort in the events.

The highlight of Camp Hyrule was the daily chat shows with Nintendo dignitaries, including Raymond Yan, Senior Vice President of Operations at DigiPen, and Charles Martinet, the voice of Mario.

The last day of camp ended in typcial cataclysmic fashion. All the campers were teleported back to the year 1998. We hope they have as much fun in eight years as they did this 2006! —CHRIS S.



For one art activity, campers were asked to doctor an image of NOA Andy. The Teletubby is funny; the pear creeps us out.

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SCHOOL OF: COMPUTER ANIMATION > DIGITAL ARTS & DESIGN > ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS > FILM > GAME DEVELOPMENT > RECORDING ARTS > SHOW PRODUCTION & TOURING

LIVING LARA

Nintendo Power: In your day-to-day life as Lara, do you feel like you're playing a role, or are you starting to identify with the character on a deeper level?

Karima Adebibe: When I put the outfit on, I go into full Lara mode. I don't really notice what's going on around me, so I guess I am really starting to identify with what makes her tick.

NP: Let's say you're strolling around some Peruvian ruins and you come across a couple of shady characters whispering about their nefarious plans. Kick them or shoot them?

KA: Kick first and then shoot if it's necessary. I'm not looking to start fights but can hold my own when things go in that direction.

NP: You've undergone SAS training and taken helicopter lessons, motorcycle classes, and a marksmanship course. Are you a natural at those kinds of activities?

KA: I've always been a bit of a tomboy, so the training bits did come very naturally, although there were some fairly intense sessions with the SAS, British army, and a combat trainer.

NP: Have you had occasion to call on your ass-kicking skills?

KA: Luckily everyone I've met as Lara has been extremely polite and respectful. Let's face it—most have seen Lara in action and know what she's capable of, so they wouldn't dare start something, right?

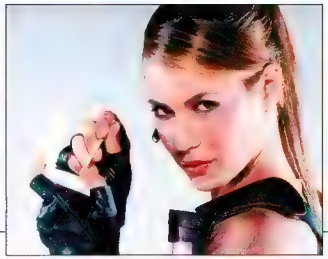
NP: If you were to design a new outfit for Lara, what would it look like?

KA: Probably very similar to what she wears in Tomb Raider: Legend—it serves her (and me) quite well. Now for lounging around the mansion . . . well, that's a different story.

NP: What's the greatest reward you've gotten from your role so far?

KA: Being the human embodiment of the most famous female video game character takes a lot of guts—guts which I thought I didn't have! So I'd say my biggest achievement is the confidence and respect I have gained for myself and my choices. Traveling the globe to meet Lara's biggest fans has also been such a pleasure.

"When I put the outfit on, I go into full Lara mode."



Because Sarah plays video games, there is a group of people making sure the games she plays are rated. They're called the Entertainment Software Rating Board, but that's the long way of saying it. Usually, they're just called the ESRB.
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
And they're the ones that do. Somebody's got to do it.
HELLO my name is Sarah
They check each game to help make sure it's right for you, your older brother, Mom and Dad, anybody.

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www.ESRB.org

December 2006 Vol. 210

NEXT MONTH

With Wii on its way and the DS dominating, it's good to be a Nintendo fan. We'll tell you how good next month.

COUNTDOWN TO LAUNCH

The Wii-volution is about to begin, and Nintendo Power is on the front lines. We'll have complete coverage of launch plans, titles, and reasons why Wii will change gaming as we know it.

DINO MIGHT

New Super Mario Bros. proved that 2-D platforming is as vital as ever. The next all-new title with old-school style is Yoshi's Island 2, starring a troop of dinosaurs and a bevy of babies. Our huge preview will reveal all the details.

WE'VE GOT THE BEAT

Story-driven rythmn game Elite Beat Agents and a slew of other creative DS titles are poised for success. A special feature will spotlight potential breakout hits.

READ THE SIGNS

A class sets out to save its teacher in world-roaming adventure Magical Starsign for DS. We'll plot out the game's twists and turns in a strategy miniguide.

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The Entertainment Software Rating Board evaluates each game's content and assigns one of the following ratings to reflect the appropriate age group for the game.

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Rating Pending

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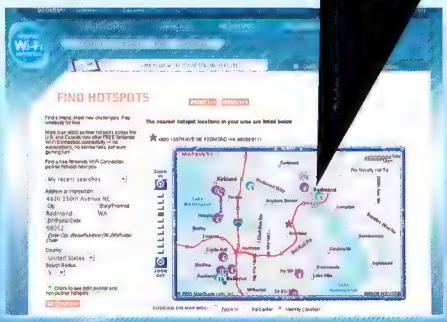
nintendo Wi-Fi connection

GAMING ON THE GO

Want to find the hottest spots for gaming in town? We've got you covered.



Everything you need to make the most of Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection hotspots is waiting for you at nintendowifi.com. Click on **Find Hotspots**, **enter your starting address**, then hit **Get Map**. All the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection–compatible hotspots in that area will appear on a map. Click on individual hotspots to get more information. For stats, support, hotspots, and the latest news about Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection players and their scores, visit:

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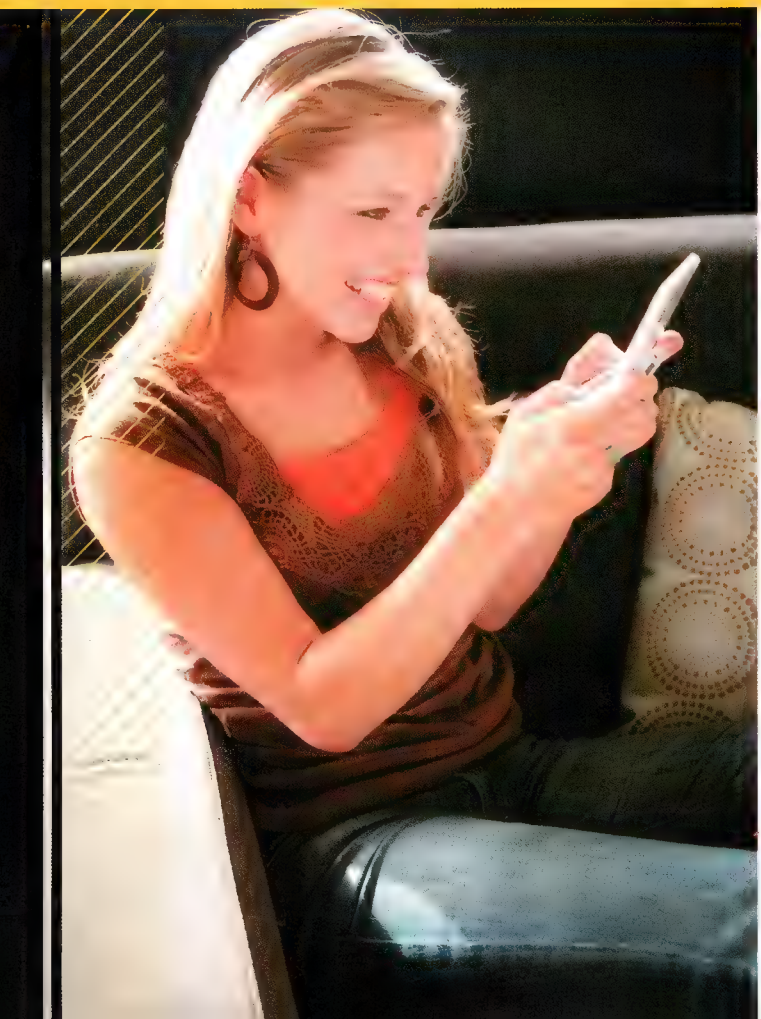

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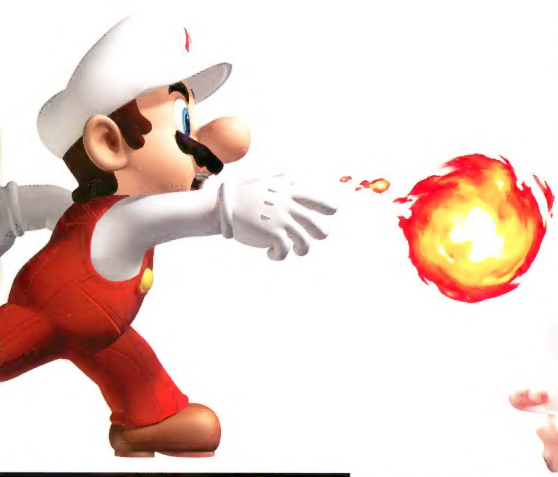

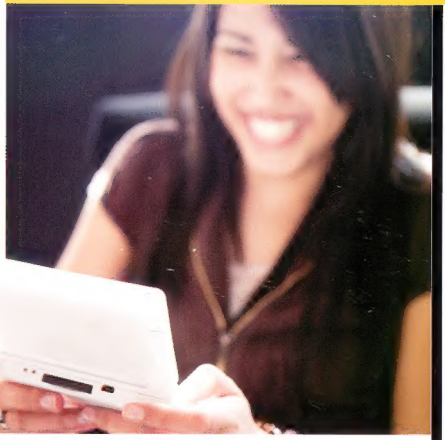

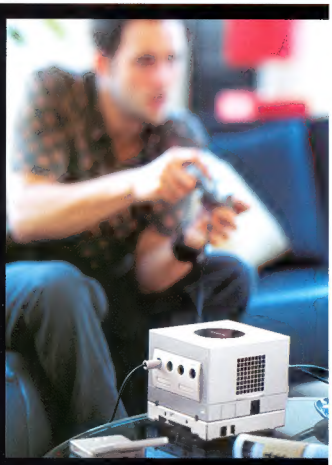

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